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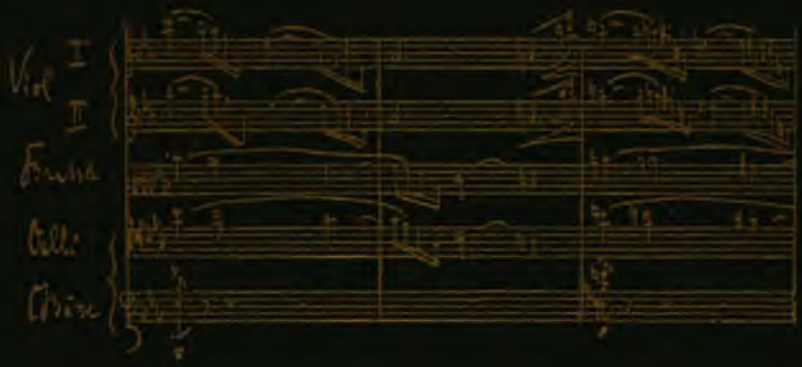
RICHARD STRAUSS

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS



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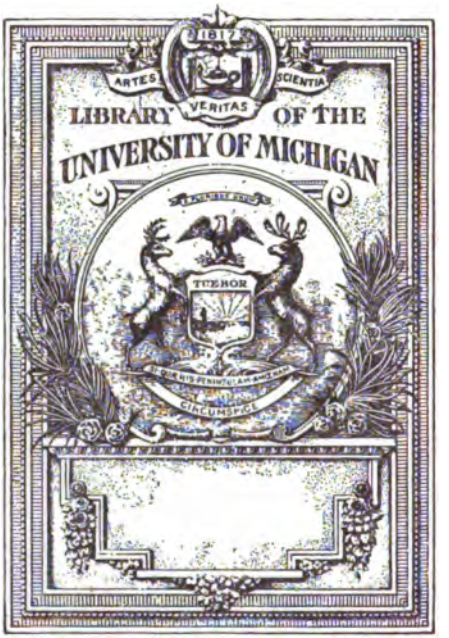

THE GIFT OF
Ross Lee Finney

15

Ross Lee Finney Jr
Tilton,
N.H.
1928

~~Alice Allen~~

RICHARD STRAUSS

RICHARD STRAUSS

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LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
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RICHARD STRAUSS

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS

BY

HENRY T. FINCK

WITH AN APPRECIATION OF STRAUSS
BY PERCY GRAINGER

Illustrated

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1917

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TO

JOSEF STRANSKY

WHOSE ELOQUENT INTERPRETATIONS, AS CONDUCTOR
OF THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, HAVE WON
MANY NEW ADMIRERS FOR THE TONE
POEMS OF RICHARD STRAUSS

CONTENTS

PAGE

Genius or Charlatan? xi

Richard Strauss: Seer and Idealist
By Percy Grainger xvii

PART I

THE STORY OF STRAUSS'S LIFE

I Munich, Music, and Beer 3
II A Remarkable Horn Player 5
III A Precocious Composer 7
IV When Strauss Hated Wagner 9
V With Hans Von Bülow at Meiningen . . 12
VI From Brahms to Liszt 16
VII A Prophet Without Honor at Home . . 19
VIII An Important Trip to Italy 21
IX The Best Tone Poems 24
X In Liszt's Place at Weimar 25
XI Marriage and Return to Munich . . . 29
XII Busy Years in Berlin 32
XIII Autobiography in Tones 36
XIV Three Operatic Sensations 37
XV Two More Surprises 39

PART II

PERSONAL TRAITS AND ANECDOTES

I As Letter Writer and Editor 43
II Progress in Music 45
III Helping Humperdinck and Others . . . 47
IV The Fight for Royalties 50

PAGE

V As Prima Donna Conductor 52
VI How Strauss Kept his Health 56
VII A Talk with William Armstrong 57
VIII At his Bavarian Country Home 60
IX How a Critic was Disarmed 63
X Always Makes Money 66
XI An English Portrait 67
XII Wanted: A Song 69
XIII More Anecdotes 71
XIV Jokes on the Musical World? 72

PART III

PROGRAM MUSIC AND SYMPHONIC POEMS: DO THEY CULMINATE IN STRAUSS?

I Has Strauss Surpassed Liszt? 77
II A Musical Misdemeanor 78
III Beethoven's Foolish Apology 79
IV An American Instance 80
V Liszt's Aristocratic Program Music . . . 82
VI The Charm of Variety 84
VII Strauss's Symphonic Puzzles 87
VIII The Emancipator of Orchestral Music . . 92
IX What Is a Symphonic Poem? 95
X "Amoosin' But Onprincipled" 97
XI Flaws in Beethoven and Brahms 98
XII A World Victory 101
XIII Strauss's Marvelous Mind 102
XIV Orchestral Tone Colors 107
XV Strauss Blows his own Horn 109
XVI Mammoth Orchestras 114
XVII Technical Skill Versus Inspiration . . . 116
XVIII Melody in the Courtroom 120
XIX From Dissonance to Cacophony 123

PAGE

XX A Great Advantage Over Liszt 127
XXI Strauss as a Judge 132
XXII The Soul of Wit 134
XXIII Strauss in his Element 135
XXIV The Epoch-Making French Horn . . . 138
XXV Improving the Musicians 141

PART IV

NINE TONE POEMS

I Works without Opus Numbers 145
II Aus Italien (From Italy) 151
III No Parsing in this Volume 154
IV Macbeth 157
V Don Juan 162
VI Death and Transfiguration 168
VII Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks . . . 173
VIII Thus Spake Zarathustra 180
IX Don Quixote 190
X A Hero's Life 197
XI Sinfonia Domestica 203
XII An Alpine Symphony 212
XIII Festival Prelude 218

PART V

SIX OPERAS AND A BALLET

I Guntram 223
II Feuersnot (Fire-Famine) 227
III Salome 234
IV Elektra 244
V The Rose Cavalier 254
VI Ariadne on Naxos 264
VII The Legend of Joseph 273

PART VI

SONGS AND OTHER VOCAL WORKS

PAGE

Songs and Other Vocal Works 283

PART VII

RICHARD STRAUSS IN AMERICA

I Correspondence with Theodore Thomas . 297
II Strauss Festival in New York . . . 301
III The Wanamaker Episode 304
IV Salome Banished 305
V Anecdotes from Alfred Hertz . . . 308
VI Hammerstein to the Rescue 310
VII Comic Opera and Ballet 311

Bibliography
German 317
English 320

Index 323

GENIUS OR CHARLATAN?

VICTOR HUGO was characterized by Matthew Arnold as "half genius, half charlatan." Other writers have bluntly maintained that no genius, however great, can get along in this world unless he has in his make-up a trace of the charlatan.

More than a trace may undoubtedly be found in Richard Strauss, who, for more than a quarter of a century, has been the most prominent composer in the world. While thousands have lauded him to the skies as a towering genius and a reformer who has created a new era in music, other thousands have allowed him little more than technical cleverness and denounced him as one who is leading music into miasmatic quagmires of cacophony and perplexing contrapuntal complications. Nay, he himself is sinking in this quagmire, we are told. "His phenomenal technic is his worst enemy."

Professor Hugo Riemann, the eminent historian and lexicographer, declares that Strauss's "last works have more and more estranged his friends. Only too clearly these works reveal his determination — hostile to all serious art — to make a sensation at all costs. More and more does his fame appear as a Colossus with feet of clay."

On the other hand, the eminent French author, Romain Rolland, maintains that "with all his faults, which are enormous, Strauss is unique, because of his great verve, his unceasing spontaneity, his privilege

of remaining young in the midst of German art which is aging; and his science and art increase every day."

Strauss is "one of those without whom we can no longer imagine our spiritual life," says Richard Specht, the eminent German critic. His "versatility is so great that each of his successive works shows him in a new light"; and "his technic is steadily becoming more complicated yet at the same time clearer, freer, more transparent." In his songs as in his orchestral works he voices the spirit of the time. Concerning his grandiose, revolutionary songs of the laboring man and stone breaker (*Arbeitsmann* and *Steinklopfer*), this critic declares that "one fancies, on hearing these grim, defiant sounds of wretchedness and want, that a horde of laboring men comes marching along singing a Marseillaise of to-morrow."

"With regard to Strauss, I have not yet heard anything of his which seems to be the utterance of a great genius," writes one eminent English critic, E. A. Baughan, although he calls him "the Turner of composers," and declares he "has the heart and mind of a poet — a sort of musical Shelley"; while according to another, Ernest Newman, he is "an epoch-making man not only in virtue of his expression and his technique, but in virtue of the range and the quality of his subjects. He is the first realist in music." "He has done for programme music what Wagner did for the opera."

A third English writer, R. A. Streatfeild, finds that "Strauss has something of Mozart's wise sad humanity, something of that half-playful yet infinitely tender sympathy for the joys and sorrows of mankind which touches at the same moment the springs of laughter and of tears." *Quot homines tot sententiae!*

George Bernard Shaw, who was a musical critic before he became the Richard Strauss of the theater, hurls his anathemas at those who do not share his views. When *Elektra* was produced in London, he called it "a historic moment in the history of art in England, such as may not occur again in our life-time"; and he went on to say that journalism which refers to such a great work of art as this Strauss opera as "abominable ugliness and noise" is "an intolerable thing, an exploded thing, a foolish thing, a parochial boorish thing, a thing that should be dropped by all good critics and discouraged by all good editors as bad form, bad manners, bad sense, bad journalism, bad politics, bad religion."

James Huneker, the Richard Strauss among musical journalists, has written many glowing eulogies of his *Doppelgänger*, many brilliantly orchestrated rhapsodies. He also remarked, in 1912: "He is easily the foremost of living composers, and after he is dead, the whirligig of fortune which has hitherto favored him may pronounce him dead forever."

What does Strauss himself think of his chances for immortality?

He has written on this subject with becoming modesty and seeming indifference in an introduction contributed by him to a collection of musical criticisms by Doctor Leopold Schmidt entitled "Aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart."

When asked to write this introduction, it seemed to him as funny as if he had invited Doctor Schmidt to write an overture for *Elektra;* but he consented. An extract from this document, relating to the value of hostile criticism, will be printed later in this volume. Pertinent to the present subject is the final paragraph,

in which he remarks that if his compositions are good, or mark a new phase in musical progress, they will be honorably mentioned in histories of music — which nobody will read! "But if they are of no value the most enthusiastic eulogists will not be able to keep them alive. The paper mills may grind them into pulp, as they have done many other publications (and will do so whether or no I agree to it), and I — I shall not shed tears over them. My son will in filial affection take out my personal copies once in a while and play them over in a version for the pianoforte. Then that too will stop and the world will go on revolving on its axis."

Whatever one may think about Strauss as being more genius or more charlatan, it cannot be denied that he is an extremely interesting character, fascinating to read and write about. I have had no end of fun writing this book, and I have tried to make it readable from cover to cover as well as useful for reference. The story of Strauss's life is more interesting than that of most musicians, and his works call for comment from so many different points of view that it is difficult to be dull in writing about them (what an excellent chance I am giving a hostile reviewer to say that I have succeeded nevertheless!). Technical terms have been avoided as far as possible, and where they could not be avoided I have tried to explain them sufficiently for the general reader.

In view of the great prominence of Strauss, it is singular that so few books have been written about him. While the number of articles about him and his works that have been printed in newspapers and periodicals is legion, there are only three or four volumes about him in German (only one of which is of great

value: see the Bibliography at the end of this volume); in French there is none; in English only one, Ernest Newman's little book of one hundred and forty-four pages, excellent as far as it goes but bringing the subject no farther than *Salome;* nor does it describe the tone poems, but simply comments on them briefly.

Under these circumstances no apology is needed for this volume. It contains, besides the story of Strauss's life and a number of reliable anecdotes, an attempt to determine his place in the history of music, besides a full description, with comments, of his more important compositions including all the tone poems and operas which were launched with such sensational success.

The best thing in this volume is, no doubt, the following, "Appreciation", written for it by Percy Grainger, who has not only done for English folk-music what Grieg did for Norwegian, but who, like Grieg, is also doing "futuristic" work in the best sense of that debatable word.

NEW YORK, April 30, 1917.

RICHARD STRAUSS: Seer and Idealist

By PERCY GRAINGER

Among the great composers of our era, Richard Strauss seems to me to stand forth as a type of the *gemütlich* family man in music; normal, kindly, well-balanced; a genius by reason of attributes of the soul and heart rather than of the head; a seer rather than a pure artist, an emotionalist rather than a craftsman; above all an inveterate idealist, seeking always heroic nobility and spiritual exaltation, and able to find them in what may seem unexpected places and subjects.

The generous magnitude of his soul leads him to desire to inclose and depict, as far as possible, all phases of existence, not only those universally considered worthy of artistic presentation, but also many that appear merely gruesome, sordid, and "unpleasant" to a less cosmic vision than his own.

I see permeating his music (the songs no less than the tone poems and operas) a humane soul overflowing with the milk of human kindness, a lackadaisically robust personality replete with tender affectionateness and fatherly insight

Wondrously Bavarian, is he not perhaps the most supremely *gemütlich* of all composers, past and present?

Brusque and roughshod on the surface at times; careless, uncritical, and unfastidious at all times; not, perhaps, a craftsman of the highest degree: but a *man*, a *human being* of the great order, supremely

possessed of the ability to soar above the petty affairs of everyday existence into the eternal realms of cosmic contemplation and religious ecstasy.

No doubt he has an almost childish weakness for tinsel and tricks, and is no eschewer of storms, turmoils, and the vagaries of passion.

But it seems to me that it is essentially as a portrayer of "the calm that follows the storm", as a prophet of eternal values, that Strauss reigns supreme among contemporaneous composers. He loves to render the human soul ensconced in the serenity of philosophic calm, looking back over the struggles of life or across the strokes of fate in a mood of benign forgiveness and understanding.

Battles and the myriad manifestations of energy merely serve to usher in this final state of lofty repose, out of which Strauss himself seems to speak in the telling accents of the first person singular.

This Nirvana, liberally tinged, it is true, with the aforesaid typical South German *gemütlichkeit*, is the very essence of the composer's own lovable temperament, and it is to this goal, therefore, that he loves to lead his heroes toilsomely, precariously, outrageously, but inevitably.

It is hard to conceive of any other composer possessing to a greater degree the peculiar qualities that go to make for a perfect exposition of this particular soul-state.

Constraining considerations of "style" (such as inclose a Debussy, a Ravel, a Cyril Scott, within the narrow bonds of exquisite choice) exist no more for Strauss than for Frederick Delius. Uncritical and unselfconscious in the extreme, and chastened by no strict standards of artistic morality, Strauss is sin-

gularly able to give his inner nature free rein in an ingenious musical language of sweeping breadth. Somewhat commonplace, somewhat sentimental phrases flow forth with a ring of perfect truth and conviction (for they are really typical of the man), and are handled with a sense of bigness that always seems inspirational rather than premeditated. The greater the moment, the more truly does Strauss appear to be himself, and himself only.

His inherent propensity for rising above all worldly deterrents to final glory is shown no less strikingly in the last act of *Salome* than it is in the trio in *Rosenkavalier*, or in the great spiritual climaxes of *Tod und Verklärung*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Legend of Joseph*, though it is shown in a different way. Here, again, we note Strauss's idealism. *Salome* might have been many things in many men's hands. Through Strauss's vision, we see the purifying white heat of self-effacing passion resulting in a rapt trance of world-forgetting ecstasy, in which are drowned all puny personal considerations of life.

This sublime tragedy of the senses seems to have awakened in Strauss's philosophic intuitions the same universally religious note that it equally would in the mind of an Oriental mystic, and were Salome's swan song put before us as religious music, I feel sure it would not seem to us incongruous in that character, so noble, so cosmically devout is its whole tenor.

No less perfect than Strauss's exponence of the calmly sublime appears to me his ability to voice a certain warm and gentle phase of modern affection: a comradely emotionalism well watered with sentiment but deliciously free from mawkishness. We

find lovely instances of what I mean in his song *Mit deinen blauen Augen*, in the ingratiating ariette *Du, Venus' Sohn, gibst süssen Lohn*, in *Der Bürger als Edelmann*, in the breakfast scene in the first act of *Rosenkavalier*, and in the entrancing final duet of the same opera.

It is as if the whole world melts in a motherly mood of gentle lovingkindness and graceful generosity.

It seems to me that in estimating Strauss, too little is usually said of the balmy, sentimental, affectionate, and idealistic side of his nature, while an altogether disproportionate emphasis is laid upon his "diabolical cleverness" as a technician, the daring of his originality, his skill as an orchestrator, and his wizardry as a descriptive programist.

In all modesty I must confess that it is not where technical deftness or abstract musical mastery is concerned that I find Strauss preëminent.

Strauss is not an intrinsically exquisite composer like Delius, the complex beauties of whose scores baffle full realization at first acquaintance, but which yield up new and ever new secrets of delicate intimacy at each fresh hearing.

Nor is Strauss a born innovator like Debussy, changing the face of contemporaneous music with one sweep, nor a prolific iconoclast like Cyril Scott, Scriabin or Stravinsky, bringing new impulses and interests to the brotherhood of fellow composers by a thousand versatile experiments.

Strauss is no dream-inspired colorist like Debussy or Ravel, weaving round his musical ideas veil upon veil of subtle tonal enchantment. Though capable of wonderful momentary inspirations as a colorist, I cannot deny that his *average* orchestration seems to me afflicted

with a certain dull, flat, stodgy quality that for want of a better term, I venture to call "middle class." Practical it is, and safe; it never sounds thin; but it is often "muddy" in the extreme, and though it covers large surfaces with a magnificent stride, it does so at the expense of charm of detail, and evinces but little sensitiveness with regard to the harmonious balance of sound proportions.

Nevertheless Strauss's every score is lit up by occasional flashes of orchestral imaginativeness of a transcendingly original quality, and the more daring these moments are — the more they emerge from the pure flame of Strauss's own whimsical imagination rather than from the nucleus of previous orchestral experiences — the more bewitchingly lovely they are.

Is this not yet another proof of the inborn effortless greatness of the man: a token that his genuis is, at its best, at least, of the purely inspirational order; not a built-up laborious product, sullied with "cleverness" and trickery, but a spirit utterance, welling forth in native and inconsidered purity from the soul within?

The imitations of sheep-bleatings in *Don Quixote*, appeal to most people's sense of the comical for non-musical reasons, no doubt. But let us set these considerations aside for a moment and listen to the orchestral bleatings as pure sound; and I ask: Is not this one of the most soothing, mesmeric, opalescent acoustical achievements in musical history?

Here again we see the soaring idealist, the inveterate beautifier in Strauss revealed.

As a mere programist, his purpose would have been amply fulfilled by making the sheep in *Don Quixote* merely sheeplike and comic, by making the chorus of carping critics (high chromatic polyphonic woodwind

passage) in *Heldenleben* merely ludicrous and cacophonous.

But in both these cases, as in a myriad others I might name, the instinctive (though possibly unconscious) æsthete in Strauss was not to be denied, in the place of what might have been two emotionally barren descriptive passages we have a precious pair of tonal creations of the most sensitive abstract beauty.

I am myself too little in sympathy with the artistic viewpoint that leads a musician to write program music — I see too little connection between literary plots and music, between everyday events and music — to be in a position to fairly judge of Strauss's "descriptive" powers. Certainly it is not on account of these that I consider him a great genius.

Strauss grew up in a would-be "brainy" age; an irreligious and emotionally impoverished age, curiously susceptible to the cheapest fripperies of intellectualism; and it is just possible that what seem to some of us the somewhat shallow descriptive tendencies of some of his tone poems are the toll he had to pay to that environment. In the later Strauss, however, I seem to note an ever-increasing development of the pure musician at the expense of all side issues, and for that reason the *Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne* (particularly the latter) kindle, in my case, a still warmer glow of sympathy, strike a still deeper note of reverence than even the most splendid and brilliant of his earlier compositions. Strauss appears to me to become more mellow, more genuine, more effortlessly himself with each successive work; another sign, for me, of the depth and truth of his genius, and of the abiding value of his muse.

With the exception of certain exquisite but very

rare moments, his resources as a harmonist strike me as lagging sadly behind those of most other great living composers.

Whether as regards harmonic originality or a refined sense for the euphonious and expressive distribution of the component parts in chords, one could not for one moment dream of comparing him with such harmonic giants as Debussy, Ravel, Delius, or Cyril Scott.

But here, again, the later Strauss by far outstrips the younger, and the harmonic beauties of the *Ariadne* overture denote, to my mind, a, for him, quite new sensitiveness in respect of harmonic possibilities, possibly derived from contact with the remarkable life-giving innovations of French and English composers in this field, or, equally likely, evolved by himself independently straight out of his own evergreen imagination now, for the first time, focused upon a more purely "chordy" style. Perhaps, however, his supreme harmonic achievement is the cascade of wondrously unrelated triads associated with the silver rose in *Rosenkavalier*, constituting one of the most ravishing chord passages in modern music and certainly something entirely unprecedented in Strauss's own compositional career.

It is interesting to compare with this the no less lovely and epoch-making chord progressions in the middle of Ravel's incomparable "Le gibet", published in 1909. Whether or not both of these emanations of the highest harmonic originality came into being without influence on either side, of one thing we can be certain: that Strauss in his "silver rose" music no less than Ravel in "Le gibet" has given the world of harmony a new inspiration and impetus from which

discerning composers can if they will, drink a profitable draught of freshness.

To my mind, however, the greatest purely musical quality of Strauss's genius is manifested in the pith and pregnance of his musical ideas, which, though frankly and bravely commonplace at times, burst forth with an almost Beethoven-like explosive inevitability and naturalness that disarm criticism, and bear upon the face of them the stamp of the great personality from which they spring.

His themes and motives make their appeal chiefly through their sharply chiselled intervallic and rhythmic physiognomy, and not by reason of their adaptability to sophisticated color treatment. They create almost the same vital impression when played on a piano, a harmonium, or a penny whistle that they do in their original orchestration, and this seems to me a conclusive proof of the initial inventive vigor that gave them birth.

On the whole, Strauss does not seem to appeal to the younger generation of composers as much as he, perhaps, deserves to do, and this, I imagine, is largely due to the somewhat coarse, careless, and uncritical methods of his compositional workmanship.

The general public seems capable of continuing to love a genius chiefly because of his emotional type, but fellow composers have to be able to *admire qualities of craftsmanship* as well, if they are not to weary of an art product.

Strauss is not a musician's musician like Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Grieg, or Debussy, capable of turning out flawless gems of artistic subtlety and perfection, but rather is he a great cosmic soul of the Goethe, Milton, Nietzsche, Walt Whitman, Edgar Lee Masters

caliber: full of dross, but equally full of godhead; lacking refinement, but not the supremer attributes; and uniquely able to roll forth some great uplifting message after gigantic preliminaries of boredom and inconsequentialness.

And is not the general public fundamentally right (as usual) in its instinctive response to Strauss? For is not, at least from the non-musician's standpoint, grandeur and purity of soul of more account than the most exquisite gifts of musical sensitiveness, originality and culture? Is not, therefore, Strauss's hold upon the general public a good omen? For does not his personal message, like that of George Moore's indescribably significant "The Brook Kerith", contain the exact reaction most needed from the present world-wide immersion in strife and commercial enslavement and competition; the message that the seer, however, at all times has to proclaim to the empirical world; that the real gold dwells in the heart within, and is not to be captured in any other place, and that the real hero is he, who, turning dissatisfied away from the outer world's illusionary shows of victory and defeat, finds contentment finally within himself in viewing in the mirror of his own contemplative soul the whole universe suffused in a glory of love and understanding?

April 26, 1917.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Richard Strauss			*Frontispiece*
Franz Strauss	FACING	PAGE	6
Strauss in his Study	"	"	60
Strauss Villa at Garmisch	"	"	60
Richard Strauss and Family	"	"	64
Caricature by Hans Lindloff	"	"	174
Caricature by Enrico Caruso	"	"	174
The Hero and His Adversaries. Caricature by Jack Vriesländer	"	"	200
Caricature of Strauss by Edward Grützner	"	"	200
Scene from *Salome*	"	"	238
Scene from *Elektra*	"	"	246
Scene from *Rosenkavalier*, Act II	"	"	258
Facsimile of Letter to Theodore Thomas	"	"	298
Mary Garden as Salome	"	"	310
Margarethe Ober as the Rosenkavalier	"	"	310

PART I

THE STORY OF STRAUSS'S LIFE

I

MUNICH, MUSIC, AND BEER

THE most important date in the musical history of Munich is 1864, because in that year Richard Strauss — often called "Richard II" — was born, and in the same year "Richard I", alias Wagner, was summoned to that city by the new Bavarian King, Ludwig II, for the purpose of staging his operas and music dramas in accordance with his own ideals. A year later *Tristan and Isolde* had its first performance, under Hans von Bülow's direction, and the world première of *Die Meistersinger* followed in 1868. Plans had been made for erecting a special opera house on the banks of the river Isar for the adequate performance of Wagner's works, including the four dramas of the *Nibelung's Ring;* but Munich was at that time such a hotbed of conservatism and of jealousies and cabals of so many kinds that even the King could not stop the rising tide of insane folly which resulted in the removing of Wagner from the city and in making Bayreuth the headquarters of his art.

The two festivals given in Bayreuth while Wagner was still living (in 1876 and 1882), and those which, with ever-increasing financial success, followed under the guidance of the widowed Cosima Wagner, having opened the eyes of the Munich folks as to their exemplary stupidity in banishing Wagner, they hastened to

make amends by building the Prinz-Regenten Theater, as a second home for his music dramas. Annual festivals were then held, at which these works, as well as Mozart's operas (in a smaller theater), were sung in an attractive manner. Thus Munich gradually became a serious rival of Bayreuth — a center for musical pilgrims and tourists in general.

Music was not, however, the only thing that made Munich famous. Its art galleries, its picturesque surroundings, and its gay life helped to allure visitors. Food was surprisingly cheap as well as savory, and it was washed down with the best beer in the world. The time came, to be sure, when Munich beer was in danger of losing its prestige. The brewers discovered that it could be made more cheaply with chemicals than in the old-fashioned way. The Government tried to put a stop to their practices by imposing a fine for the use of anything but malt and hops; but the brewers cheerfully paid the fine and still prospered. The law was then changed. Instead of paying a fine, the head of the brewing firm had to go to prison. That promptly put an end to the use of chemicals; and thanks to this salutary law, Munich beer soon conquered the whole world, whole trainloads of it being sent daily in all directions.

What has all this to do with the life of Richard Strauss? A good deal, gentle reader. He was born in a Munich brewer's building. His mother was the daughter of the *Grossbrauer* Georg Pschorr, senior, whose name and whose products, further improved by his son Georg, are known throughout the world much better and, on the whole, rather more favorably than those of his musical nephew. Not a few of those who visit Munich go to see the house at Altheimereck

Number 2, on which there is a sign with these words: *Am 11. Juni 1864 wurde hier Richard Strauss geboren.*

In this house Richard's father lived to the end of his life, in one of the upper floors, to which the noise of the restaurant below did not reach. It was a good restaurant, in which, in 1876, I often supped on soup, chicken, salad, and dessert for the very moderate sum of a mark, or a quarter of a dollar. Little did I dream then that up-stairs was living a boy of twelve whose life I would be asked to write forty years later!

The Pschorrs were a musical family. There were four daughters besides Josephine (Richard's mother), and nearly a dozen cousins of Richard, some of whom assisted on occasion at the homemade music in the third story over the brewery restaurant. The mother knew enough of piano playing to give her boy a start when he was in his fifth year, and subsequently, these lessons were continued by August Tombo, who played the harp in the royal orchestra of Munich. To this orchestra also belonged Richard's father, Franz Strauss, who was at the same time a professor at the Royal Academy of Music.

II

A REMARKABLE HORN PLAYER

There is a story of a musician who boasted he was the best horn player in the world. When asked how he proved it, he replied, "I don't prove it, I admit it." Franz Strauss, whom Bülow called "the Joachim of the horn", would have had no difficulty in actually proving that he was the best horn player, not only in Munich but in Germany. Richard Wagner, who did more than any other master in developing the

resources of the French horn — or what the Germans call the *Waldhorn* (forest horn) — would not have hesitated to give him a certificate to that effect, although he knew that this remarkable musician violently disliked his music.

Franz Strauss, in truth, was one of the leaders of the cliques and cabals which drove Wagner, the revolutionary reformer, from the Bavarian capital, and made life a nightmare to his apostle, Hans von Bülow. So very conservative, indeed, was he that he ventured, at rehearsals, to differ in matters of pace and phrasing with even so old-fashioned a conductor as Lachner. He seems to have had a good deal of the "independence" of Brahms's father, who played the double-bass in the Hamburg Opera, and who one day, when the conductor suggested his doing a passage differently, declared, "Herr Kapellmeister, I want you to understand that this is *my* double-bass and I shall play on it as I please!"

Max Steinitzer relates that Wagner actually was afraid of Franz Strauss. When *Die Meistersinger* was being staged, he got Hans Richter to play for him at home the horn solo in the Beckmesser pantomime, for fear that Strauss might declare at the rehearsal that it was unplayable!

It must not be inferred that Richard Strauss's father did not do his best with Wagner's music because he disliked it. On the contrary, he played the glorious horn parts in *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* as lusciously as he did the solos in the works of Beethoven, Weber, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. He even consented to accompany Levi to Bayreuth and help perform *Parsifal* one summer. But personally he never got along with Wagner. At a rehearsal in Munich there was such a

FRANZ STRAUSS

violent altercation between these two men that Wagner became "speechless" with indignation — which meant a good deal, and when, as Steinitzer further informs us, Wagner's death was announced by Levi to his orchestra, Strauss was the only one who did not show his respect by rising.

His implacable hatred — for purely musical reasons — illustrates the difficulties Wagner had to contend with in Munich and after him — as if in revenge — Franz Strauss's own son, Richard.

III

A PRECOCIOUS COMPOSER

It is well known that Schubert was only eighteen years old when he composed his greatest song, *The Erlking*. Mendelssohn performed an even more remarkable feat when, as a youth of only seventeen, he composed and scored for orchestra the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a work remarkable for its melodic originality, its clever structure, and its realistic as well as beautiful coloring.

While Richard Strauss neither as a youth nor an adult penned a work equal in melodic inspiration to that overture or *The Erlking*, he was nevertheless one of the most remarkable prodigies known to musical history. Indeed there is something almost uncanny about his achievements before his twentieth year — achievements far more remarkable than those of Mozart, Beethoven, and most other masters at the same age.

As a mere boy of six he began to compose. "He wrote notes before he did the letters of the alphabet,"

says Max Steinitzer, who devotes no fewer than twenty-six pages of his book on Strauss to brief descriptions of the early pieces and songs of this amazing boy. There are nearly a hundred of these preceding his Opus 1; for he had sufficient judgment to discard them as hardly worth printing. Among them are orchestral overtures and other pieces, sonatas, songs with piano or orchestral choral pieces, chamber works, in great variety. Some of them were composed specially for the musical gatherings in the Pschorr building, when he himself sat at the piano, or sang, or played the violin. Not a few of them he scribbled during school hours instead of attending to his lessons. The songs, including twenty-five dedicated to his aunt Johanna, already show a characteristic disregard for vocal idiom and facile execution.

In a letter dated 1910, he expressed his regret at having given so much time to all these juvenile works "at the direct cost of much freshness and vigor." But they surely helped him to develop the technical virtuosity which subsequently became his chief asset.

One looks in vain through these early productions in the hope of discovering striking indications of the future revolutionist who created such a panic in the conservative camp. On the contrary, the future lion cooes here as gently as any sucking dove. Nor does he, in fact, show himself in his true colors in the earliest of his compositions that appeared in print with opus numbers. Up to his Opus 16, the orchestral fantasia *From Italy*, we find little that suggests the Richard Strauss we now know in the concert halls. Opus 1 is a *Festmarsch;* Opus 2, a string quartet; 3, five piano pieces; 4, a concert overture (MS); 5, piano sonata; 6, violoncello sonata; 7, serenade for wind instru-

ments; 8, violin concerto; 9, piano pieces; 10, songs; 11, horn concerto; 12, symphony in F minor.

These pieces for the most part breathe the calm, orthodox chaste spirit of Haydn, Mozart, and the other classical masters whom Richard's father as well as his teacher, F. W. Meyer, had taught him to revere as models. Gradually, he came also under the influence of Mendelssohn and Schumann, and, through the latter, of Brahms, who is distinctly suggested by certain traits of the F Minor symphony as well as by Opus 13, a quartet with piano; Opus 14, *Wanderers Sturmlied;* and the *Burleske*, which has no opus number, but belongs in this period, ending with the composer's twenty-first year.

Strauss not only wrote many of his early pieces while he was still in school, but he had the satisfaction of listening to public performances of some of them before he was graduated. Particularly big did he loom in the eyes of his classmates after Generalmusikdirektor Levi had conducted his D Minor symphony at a concert of the Musikalische Akademie before a large audience, which vigorously applauded the talented young composer, then in his seventeenth year.

IV

WHEN STRAUSS HATED WAGNER

Young Strauss inherited from his father not only his love of the classical style and forms, but a violent hatred of Richard Wagner's music, of which he subsequently became one of the most passionate champions. Probably some of the readers of these pages have chanced to peruse Count Tolstoy's fierce denunciation

of the most poetic and inspired of Wagner's music dramas: *Siegfried.* In it the ludicrous arrogance of pitiful ignorance seems to have reached high tide; but Richard Strauss, at the age of fifteen, belabored the same masterwork in a letter to his friend Thuille after a fashion that makes it one of the most humorous documents in the history of music, though it was written very much in earnest and by one who was musical to the finger tips.

He was horribly bored by this work, he declares: "It was abominable. The introduction is a long roll for the drum with bombardon and bassoons roaring in the deepest tones, which sounds so stupid that I laughed outright. Of coherent melodies not a trace. I tell you the thing is so disorderly you cannot have the faintest conception of it." One of the things sung by Mime, he continued, "would have killed a cat, and horror of the hideous dissonances would melt rocks into omelettes. The violins exhaust themselves in eternal tremolos and the brass in violin passages; even the muted trumpet is used by Wagner in order to make everything as hideous and infamous as possible. My ears buzzed from these abortions of harmonies, if the word harmony is not out of place altogether; and the last act is a deadly bore. . . . The only thing that seemed at least in tune was the song of the Forest Bird." . . . And so it goes on for a dozen more lines which to-day must amuse Strauss as much as the language of one of the critics who referred to his own tone poem *Till Eulenspiegel* as "a vast and coruscating jumble of instrumental cackles about things unfit to be mentioned."

Even *Lohengrin* did not please young Strauss. He liked it as a drama but the music seemed to him "fear-

fully sweet and morbid." Steinitzer relates that when in November, 1880, Wagner received an ovation at a *Tristan* performance, Strauss paid no attention to him. To Ludwig Thuille he repeatedly made the prediction that "ten years hence nobody will know who Wagner is."

Less than a year later, however, he discovered Wagner, and, oddly enough, this came about through his studying of the full scores of *Tristan* and *Die Walküre*, which made a much deeper impression on him than the actual performances, with their many imperfections. A few years later, when he heard *Tristan* in an Italian version at Bologna, he was amazed at its wonderful singableness, and wrote enthusiastically to one of his uncles that it was the "most delightful *bel canto* opera, such as Messrs. Hanslick and colleagues were always sighing for."

His conversion was now complete. In 1891 he attended the Bayreuth Festival. Widow Cosima Wagner invited him to spend the following Christmas holiday with her and persuaded him to contribute an article to the *Bayreuther Blätter*. At Weimar he had previously become the head of the Wagner Society, and conducted a number of performances of Wagner's operas, going so far in his zeal that he restored nearly all the pages that had been cut by his predecessors in order to shorten the operas. And when, a decade later, the question of prolonging the copyright on *Parsifal* came before the German Reichstag (Parliament), Richard Strauss was foremost among those whose pens were used to persuade the legislators to allow Bayreuth to continue its monopoly of Wagner's final work. It is needless to add that when Heinrich Conried invited him to conduct *Parsifal* at the Metro-

politan Opera House in New York, he promptly declined the honor. But let us not look too far ahead in the story of Strauss's life. We must now take up the case of two musicians who, in very different ways, helped to change him from a conservative to a radical: Hans von Bülow and Alexander Ritter.

V

WITH HANS VON BÜLOW AT MEININGEN

Hans von Bülow, who was chosen by Wagner to conduct the first performances of *Tristan and Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger* in Munich, first heard of Richard Strauss through his friend Eugen Spitzweg, who published some of Strauss's compositions and sent him copies for his opinion. Von Bülow did not approve of them; on the contrary, he wrote to Spitzweg: "Piano pieces by R. Str. I thoroughly dislike — they are unripe and compared with him, Lachner has the imagination of a Chopin. I miss all youthfulness in his invention. Not a genius, I am thoroughly convinced, but only a talent of the kind that requires 60 to make a bushel."

Possibly this verdict would have been less tartly expressed had not von Bülow, who was an irritable and irate musician, borne in mind that "R. Str." was the son of the obstreperous professor and horn player who had made so much trouble for him and for Wagner at the Royal Opera. However that may be, he soon got over his tantrum; he first learned to esteem Strauss as the composer of the *Serenade* (Opus 7) for thirteen wind instruments, which pleased him so much that he included it in the programs of the concerts he gave at

home and on tour with the Meiningen Orchestra. In his "Persönliche Erinnerungen an Hans von Bülow", printed in the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse* (December 25, 1909), Strauss relates that it was at a performance of this *Serenade* in Berlin that he first met von Bülow, who asked him to write a whole suite of pieces for the same number of wind instruments. Strauss complied with his wishes. His father subsequently wrote to von Bülow, asking him to give a rehearsal of this suite in Munich before its performance there by the Meiningen Orchestra, to which von Bülow assented, on condition that Richard Strauss should conduct his own work. When the time came, it was found impracticable to have a special rehearsal in Munich; but Strauss conducted the performance though he had never before piloted an orchestra. "I conducted my piece in a dusky state of mind," he wrote; "all I know is that I did not have a smash-up."

His father nevertheless was so much pleased with the result that he went to the artists' room after the performance to thank his old enemy for giving him a chance to hear his son's composition. Von Bülow, however, was not in a conciliatory mood. "Like an enraged lion he pounced upon my father, exclaiming: 'You have no occasion to thank me; I have not forgotten all the things you formerly did to annoy me, in the accursed Munich. What I have done today I have done because your son has talent, not on your account.'"

Not long afterwards von Bülow put on one of his programs in Meiningen, Strauss's concerto for horn — possibly because he had heard that, on account of its extreme difficulty, even Professor Franz Strauss "the Joachim of the horn", had not dared to perform it publicly in Munich, though he often practised it at home.

Besides conducting the Meiningen Orchestra, von Bülow occasionally gave piano recitals in various cities, or lessons in Berlin or Frankfort. During his absence, Professor F. Mannstädt took care of the orchestra; but when Mannstädt went to live in Berlin, von Bülow needed a new *Hofmusikdirektor*, and his choice fell on Richard Strauss. In suggesting his engagement, he wrote to the Duke: "His only fault is his youth; he is only twenty-two, but his whole personality commends him to the respect of the Court Orchestra, which has already learned to esteem him as a composer."

Strauss (who really was only twenty-one) was delighted with this offer, although the emoluments were only fifteen hundred marks ($360) a year. He fully realized what extraordinary opportunities for progress in his professional studies he would have as the assistant of the most renowned orchestral conductor of his day. Von Bülow was only one of the many distinguished pupils of Liszt, but one of the few whom Wagner deigned to instruct personally in the art of orchestral interpretation. He studied with him at Zurich in 1850–1851, and Wagner then sent him to Liszt, with whom he remained four years. His keenly analytical mind and amazing memory (he could play or conduct a new piece by heart after looking it over a few times) enabled him to get all possible profit from the instruction of his teachers, the two greatest musicians of the time; and it is no wonder that as a conductor, in particular, he made a sensation, for his principles of interpretation were those of Wagner and Liszt amalgamated.

It was in 1880 that he accepted the post of director of the Ducal Orchestra at Meiningen, and during the

five years he remained there, he exerted an influence comparable in some respects to that of Liszt at Weimar. His orchestra was smaller and less distinguished in personnel than the royal orchestra in the larger German cities; yet with this comparatively inferior material he achieved results which made the concerts of the "Meininger" the talk and the envy of the Empire. Not only did he apply the Wagner-Liszt principles of interpretation to classical as well as romantic and modern works, but he furthermore subjected his players to an amount of careful drill that was almost unprecedented. The musicians learned their parts by heart, and most of them stood while playing. So well were they trained that when von Bülow played a piano concerto they needed no special conductor. No wonder that when this organization went on tour, local orchestras nearly everywhere seemed somewhat slovenly in comparison.

With these facts in mind, we can understand why Strauss was so happy when von Bülow invited him to share with him the privilege of presiding over this remarkable orchestra. Several hours daily he was privileged to be present at rehearsals in which his master opened the ears of his musicians as to the true inwardness of the varied compositions they were called upon to play. As an interpreter of Beethoven's symphonies, von Bülow was second only to Wagner. He was the high priest of Brahms, and the foreign composers he welcomed to his programs — among them Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Smetana, Dvořák, helped to widen Strauss's horizon.

He conducted usually from memory, thus setting an example which has since been followed by many of the great orchestral leaders. It is supposed to

give a conductor the same advantages over those of his colleagues who look at the score during the performance that an orator has over one who reads his speech.

Von Bülow wittily divided conductors into two classes: those who have the score in their head, and those who have their head in the score.

VI

FROM BRAHMS TO LISZT

Great as was Bülow's influence on Richard Strauss, it did not affect him as a composer — quite the contrary. Meiningen was his high school, but it also became the turning point in his career, the place where he turned his back on Brahms and the conservatives and became a champion and follower of Wagner in the opera house, Liszt in the concert hall.

He himself has related how, starting with Haydn and Mozart as his models, he gradually paid the flattery of imitation to Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, and finally to Brahms. Mention has been made of the particular works in which his admiration for Brahms is indicated. When he became assistant conductor at Meiningen he still adored Brahms — so much so, indeed, that after that master had conducted his fourth symphony in that town, Strauss participated in a series of games of cards (skat), the winner of which was to have as prize the score of that symphony.

It was his privilege at Mannheim to conduct some of Brahms's works and once, on October 18, 1885, Brahms heard him conduct some of his own (Strauss's)

works. It was an important occasion in the young man's career; the first time (excepting when he conducted his *Serenade* for strings in Munich) that he wielded the bâton and also the first time he appeared in public as solo pianist (in a Mozart concerto). After hearing his juvenile symphony, Brahms said, "Quite pretty, young man." He then advised him to study Schubert's dances as models in the art of invention; he also warned him against thematic juggling and other things. In writing to Hermann Wolf in Berlin concerning this occasion, von Bülow declared that Richard's "début as a conductor as well as a pianist was simply stunning."

Concerning the Strauss symphony (in F minor) played on this occasion, Bülow wrote that it was "very significant, original, ripe in form." Not long afterwards in a letter to Strauss himself, he said: "You, my dear young friend, know always how to guide your pen the right way, avoiding dreary spots or steppes." But he soon changed his mind about the guidance of that pen. As long as his dear young friend wrote in the conservative vein, Bülow was entirely with him; but when the *Italian Fantasy* appeared, which marks the parting of the ways — the change from absolute to program music — Bülow balked. True, he accepted the dedication of this composition, but to Ritter he wrote not long afterwards: "Does my age make me so reactionary? I find that the clever composer has gone therein to the extreme limits of tonal possibilities (in the realm of beauty) and, in fact, has frequently gone beyond those limits, without real necessity."

Yet, compared with his later tone poems, *Aus Italien* is as simple and harmless as a Mozart symphony.

Advancing age certainly did have the effect of making von Bülow reactionary. He refused, for instance, to do anything for Gustav Mahler. He even knocked Liszt, his former idol, from his pedestal. Like others who took up Brahms as their main pabulum, he had tired of the fleshpots of Egypt, and his appetite craved food without much spice. He still took some interest in Strauss's early tone-poems, *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration*, acknowledging their success with the public; but his interest in them was purely musical. Their poetic side, which affiliated him with Liszt, he ignored, to Strauss's distress.

Obviously Hans von Bülow was not the man to lead him from Brahms to Liszt. Another musician, Alexander Ritter, did that. One of Strauss's biographers, Doctor Erich Urban, contends, it is true, that it was von Bülow who did it; but the preceding paragraph shows how thoroughly he erred. Von Bülow would have taken his friend from Liszt to Brahms, could he have done so. We have, moreover, Strauss's own word for it that Ritter was the man who converted him to musical modernity. In an autobiographic sketch printed in 1898, he said explicitly that it was Ritter who changed him into a "musician of the future by revealing to him the import of the works and writings of Wagner and Liszt." "To him alone," he continues, he owed the comprehension of these two masters; and he it was who pointed out to him the direction in which he could now travel by himself. Ritter, he further attests, had a thorough knowledge of philosophical works, and of literature old and new. "His influence was like a storm-wind. He urged me to develop the

expressive, poetic side of music, after the examples given by Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner."

Alexander Ritter was one of that considerable number of composers who just fall short of greatness as creators. He was born in Russia but made his home in Dresden, where he married a niece of Richard Wagner. He composed two comic operas and several symphonic poems, but failed to get the recognition he and his friends thought he deserved, and was finally glad to accept a place as a member of the famous Meiningen Orchestra. His devotion to Liszt was exceeded only by his withering contempt for Brahms. Steinitzer relates that on one occasion he declared: "Brahms we must study long enough till we discover that there is nothing in him."

Strauss's engagement at Meiningen lasted from January, 1885 to April, 1886. The last five months he was the sole conductor of the Ducal Orchestra, as von Bülow had resigned his position, for reasons which readers who may wish to know will find in Steinitzer (second edition, page 36). It had something to do with Brahms. This composer's influence is still to be found in the only work Strauss composed at Meiningen, the *Burleske* for piano and orchestra, which, however, after playing it over with orchestra, he felt inclined to look on as "sheer nonsense."

VII

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR AT HOME

Although the Meiningen authorities and the public seemed well pleased with Strauss as successor to von Bülow, he was of course too little known to keep up

the orchestra's prestige on tour; nobody knew then how famous he was destined to become both as conductor and as composer. There was a rumor that the Duke intended to reduce the size of the orchestra, and Strauss felt more or less uncertain as to the future. Von Bülow advised him to remain and await developments; but when Intendant von Perfall of the Munich Opera invited him to return to his native city and accept the modest post of Music Director, he accepted, only to feel sorry for this step ere long. At Meiningen, though resources were limited, he was conductor-in-chief. In Munich he ranked only third, after Levi and Fischer, who appropriated nearly all the operas that were worth while, leaving little for their assistant. His one chance seemed at hand when he was allowed to preside over the rehearsals when Wagner's juvenile opera, *The Fairies*, was revived. But at the last moment the command was transferred to Fischer. In a conference relating to this matter "Strauss was like a lioness defending her young"; but, as Steinitzer relates, "the Intendant declared that he disliked conducting in the Bülow style, and violently assailed Strauss because of his high pretensions for one of his age and lack of experience."

He did not realize that Richard Strauss at the age of twenty-two knew his business better than most conductors do at forty-four. Indeed, in view of von Perfall's conservative attitude and his unhappy experiences with von Bülow, it is a wonder that he ever offered a position to that conductor's pupil.

He was by no means the only one who disapproved of the Wagner-Liszt-Bülow style of interpretation which Strauss had made his own. Just as Wagner,

when he conducted the concerts of the London Philharmonic, was told again and again that he must not read the music in hand as he read it because "Mendelssohn did not do it that way", so Strauss was censured for every deviation from the conventional. As he wrote to von Bülow, he longed for a position elsewhere where he would not "get into a violent collision with both conductors and artists" whenever he allowed himself "the slightest slackening of pace in a classical opera. So it was again with the *Water-Carrier:* whatever Lachner had not done I must not do either. To conduct as I wish and feel, one must have the authority of a first position, backed up by an Intendant on whose unconditional support one can rely."

VIII

AN IMPORTANT TRIP TO ITALY

Being only third conductor, with little to do, had one advantage. It left plenty of leisure for composing. Among the important works he created during his three years' connection with the Munich Opera, the first was the symphonic fantasia *From Italy*, the sketches for which he made during an Italian journey taken at the advice of Brahms just after he had signed his Munich contract.

What gives this *Italian Fantasy* special significance is the fact that it is, as Strauss himself called it, "the connecting link between the old and new" — in other words, the bridge which took him from Brahms to Liszt; for Brahms, though born twenty-two years after Liszt, represents an earlier stage of musical development.

On his Italian trip, Strauss visited the principal cities, from Florence to Naples. He had never before had any faith in getting inspiration from the beauties of nature, but "among the ruins of Rome", he wrote to von Bülow, "thoughts came to me as if on wings."

The *Fantasy* pays tribute to the traditional symphonic form in being in four movements; but in spirit it is new, genuine program music, as much so as Liszt's Italian piano pieces, or his symphonic poems, as is indicated by its subtitles: "In the Campagna", "Among the Roman Ruins", "Fantastic Pictures of Vanished Splendors", "Melancholy Feelings while Basking in the Sunniest Present", "At the Shores of Sorrento", "Neapolitan Folk Life."

In the belief that he was using a folk song, he helped himself in the last movement to the popular "*Funiculi Funicula*", which perambulating Italian quartet singers perpetrate in every café and restaurant they visit. Concerning this song, two amusing bits of information are contained in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" and in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians." In the former, Robin H. Legge remarks that *Aus Italien* is "a comparatively poor and quite unrepresentative effusion apart altogether from the *faux pas* contained in it by mistaking a popular song composed in St. Johns Wood, London, for a Neapolitan folk song." In Grove, J. A. Fuller Maitland relates that "when *Aus Italien* was first given in London, at one of Henschel's symphony concerts, some disappointment was felt at the work not being played in its entirety; it only transpired later that the finale, being based on a tune which Strauss no doubt imagined to be a genuine folk song, was scarcely suitable to be played before

an audience already sated with the air and fully aware that Signor Denza was its author."

The first performance of this work, given in Munich under the composer's direction on March 2, 1887, furnished him a foretaste of the things he was fated to endure whenever one of his bold tone poems was first brought before the public. In a letter to his uncle Horburger, he gives an amusing account of this occasion: "There has been much ado here over the performance of my Fantasy — general amazement and wrath because I too have now begun to go my own way, create my own form and bother the heads of indolent persons. The first three movements were tolerably well received, but after the last part, Neapolitan Folklife, which, I admit, is somewhat extravagantly crazy (life in Naples, to be sure, is boisterous) there was not only lively applause, but real hissing, which of course amused me greatly. Well, I console myself; I know the way I want to travel quite well. No one has ever become a great artist who was not held by thousands to be crazy. The Pschorrs were enchanted and there were a few other enthusiasts: Levi, Ritter, Kapellmeister Meyer — these were quite carried away by it; they were the only ones who already knew the work."

Max Steinitzer, who cites this letter, relates that Strauss's father, mortified and indignant because of the hisses, hastened to the artists' room to see his son after the performance, but found him sitting on the table, dangling his legs cheerfully.

Richard Strauss evidently has always enjoyed a fight in the concert hall, as much as Susan B. Anthony, the original suffragette, did in the lecture room.

This was not the only time when Father Strauss,

who had done so much to discourage Wagner and his helpers, found, to his dismay, the conservative batteries turned against his own son. But the son, far from being intimidated, followed the example of Wagner in paying no attention to such demonstrations.

IX

THE BEST TONE POEMS

Far from repenting, and returning to the conservative camp, he became still more Straussian in his next two elaborate works: *Macbeth*, which is the first of his symphonic poems (in one movement), and *Don Juan*, which, it may as well be said now, is the most inspired of all his compositions, though he was only twenty-four when he wrote it, and he has been busy ever since, adding seven more tone poems and half a dozen operas.

Macbeth, though composed before *Don Juan*, was published after it, as Opus 23, because Strauss subjected it, in Weimar, to a thorough revision before he considered it ready for the printer. Comments on all these works will be found in later chapters.

Don Juan, Opus 20, is to-day, three decades after its creation, the most popular of Strauss's tone poems, in America as well as in Europe. It is worth noting that the most popular of all his songs, the *Serenade*, also belongs to this early period, its opus number being 17.

Special interest attaches also to Opus 18, a sonata for violin and piano, not so much because of its inherent merits — which are modest — as because it was his last piece of chamber music. A born orchestral

colorist, he had evidently reached the conclusion that he could not show to best advantage in that branch of music in which Brahms most excelled.

Thenceforth, furthermore, he turned his back on the piano, except in connection with his *lieder*. Songs, with piano or orchestra, tone poems for enlarged orchestra, and operas thenceforth monopolized his attention till 1913, when he wrote the music for a pantomimic ballet, *The Legend of Joseph.*

X

IN LISZT'S PLACE AT WEIMAR

Although Hans von Bülow did not approve of the cacophonic and programmatic features of Strauss's works, he held him to be, next to Brahms, the most important musical personality of the time. He put *Macbeth* on a Berlin program and gladly recorded the popular success of *Don Juan.*

He also used his influence to secure for Strauss the position of Court Conductor at Weimar, which was better than being third conductor in Munich. So, from October, 1889, to June, 1894, Strauss occupied the position in which Liszt had made the small city of Weimar the world's musical center by gathering about him not only all the aspiring and already famous pianists but also the composers, whose works he produced, in accordance with his motto, "*First place to the living.*"

This Lisztian motto Strauss made his own. Some of the programs conducted by him in Weimar were "madly modern" as he called them, but the concerts were "well attended and much applauded." At the

first rehearsal with the Weimar orchestra, he made a speech in which he expressed his pride at standing in the place of Liszt whose high principles he promised to follow. That the works of Liszt, so many of which had been created in Weimar, had a prominent place on his programs, need not be said.

Strauss was one of the few who at that time fully understood the epoch-making importance of Liszt's orchestral works. In conservative Munich, where, in recent years his *Faust* symphony has been applauded as frequently and as warmly as any of Beethoven's works, it seldom happened at that time that one of Liszt's works was heard without derisive exclamations on the part of some of the hearers, as Steinitzer informs us; many, he adds, who did not wonder that Strauss became a follower of Wagner, could not comprehend that he put Liszt's name also on his banner. But the more he studied the marvelously original compositions of this master — original not only in musical and poetic content, but also in form — the more he felt that his own creative activity must be along the lines traced by Liszt.

From no point of view is Liszt more remarkable than from that of his many-sidedness. In view of this, Strauss held that whole concerts should be devoted to him exclusively, in order to illumine him from all directions. From letters to Ritter passages are cited in which he expressed his great admiration of various works of Liszt, among them the *Dante* Symphony, *Mazeppa, The Battle of the Huns, The Mephisto Waltz,* the concertos, the oratorio *St. Elizabeth.* What he says about this last is characteristic: "So little technical display, yet so much poetry; so little counterpoint, but so much music."

In the opera house he devoted himself with like enthusiasm to Wagner, whose works he strove to produce not only with as near an approach to Bayreuth musical standards as his small orchestra and the capacity of the singers permitted, but with a stubborn determination to carry out Wagner's wishes as to the constant dovetailing of the scenic effects and the action and the continuous comments of the orchestra. He had prepared himself for this by repeated visits to Bayreuth, where, one summer, he guided the middle chorus in *Parsifal* and otherwise made himself useful. In 1894 he was invited to conduct some of the performances of *Tannhäuser* given at Bayreuth, which he did much to the satisfaction of Wagner's widow, who exclaimed: "Well, well, so modern, yet how well you conduct *Tannhäuser*" (which, bear in mind, was one of Wagner's early works).

A really pathetic illustration of his devotion to Wagner is given by his friend Doctor Arthur Seidl in "Straussiana." In May, 1891, he was taken very seriously ill with congestion of the lungs. For a week the doctors despaired of his life. He knew how critical the situation was; but while trying to reconcile himself to the thought of death, he said to a pupil and friend it would be really well if he could die now; but a moment later he added solemnly, "No, before I do, I should love to conduct *Tristan*."

He doubtless remembered how, only seven years earlier, even he, with his abnormal musical intelligence, had failed to understand this music drama — to comprehend its new harmonic and contrapuntal features. In order to help others where he had failed, he gave lecture recitals at the piano on Wagner's works, which must have been interesting.

That he went so far in his enthusiasm as to restore all the pages wisely cut by his predecessors was related on a preceding page. Like Wagner himself, Strauss knew not the value of moderation. Many of his own works would gain much through condensation.

An amusing aspect of his Wagnerolatry is the fact that he conducted the works of the Bayreuth master (and those only) standing.

In the summer his bronchial trouble returned and he was advised to take another trip south. In November he started for Egypt via Greece, taking with him the libretto written by himself for his first opera, *Guntram*, in which, as we shall see later, he published in tones his complete subjection to Wagner.

Instead of resting during his trip, he devoted much of his time to composing the *Guntram* music, the first act being completed in Africa, at Luxor, while the second was orchestrated in a Sicilian villa near Catania, where he had a view from his windows of Mount Ætna. Here he also sketched the third act, which, subsequently, was completed on his return to Bavaria near the picturesque Chiemsee.

An interesting letter from Cairo (dated December 19, 1892) to Doctor Arthur Seidl is printed by this writer in his "Straussiana" (pp. 34–35): "What I should like best would be to remain here altogether, in this delightful land of palms, roses, acacias, under a sun which has little in common with the fixed star which in our Germany now and then pretends to shine; reveling in this illumination, enjoying Spring, Summer, and Autumn at the same time; among these charming, amusing native 'savages' in the solitude of the glorious desert, entirely alone with the God of the

Christians, who has come to mean so little in Germany — here I should like to remain and compose one opera after another, regardless of what they would do in Europe with the poor things."

XI

MARRIAGE AND RETURN TO MUNICH

At the performance under Strauss of *Tannhäuser* in Bayreuth, to which reference has just been made, the Elizabeth was his betrothed, Pauline de Ahna, whom he married a few weeks later, on September 10, 1894. He had first met her seven years previously, while visiting his uncle, Georg Pschorr, at Feldafing, a Bavarian summer resort not far from Munich. His uncle's nearest neighbor was General de Ahna, whose older daughter, Pauline, had been a student at the Munich Conservatory. Though possessing an agreeable voice, she had little conception of the requirements of a singer in the opera house or concert hall until Strauss took her in hand and gave her an insight into the subtleties of dramatic interpretation; especially in Wagner's operas. She followed him to Weimar, where she continued her studies and made some appearances on the stage as Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser*, Pamina in the *Magic Flute*, Fidelio in Beethoven's opera, and Saint Elizabeth in Liszt's operatic oratorio. Her engagement to Strauss was announced in May, 1894.

It is needless to say that she made a special study of the Strauss songs, to the popularization of which from this time on her singing, often with her husband at the piano, contributed a good deal.

Pauline de Ahna was also the heroine of Strauss's first opera, *Guntram*, which had its première at Weimar on May 12, 1894, under his own direction. It was not a brilliant success; nor did it achieve more than one performance when in the autumn of the following year it was produced at Munich.

To that city he returned in October, 1894, because he was invited to become the successor of General-musikdirector Levi, who however did not entirely give up the reins until two years later.

The description of *Guntram* to be given in a later chapter will make it clear why it would have been a wonder if it had succeeded. The performance, too, was inadequate, the leading singers of the Royal Opera having refused their coöperation, probably because of the unvocal character and the difficulties of the rôles.

The reviews in the press were anything but flattering. "It is incredible," Strauss wrote on January 16, 1896, to his friend Arthur Seidl, "what a number of enemies *Guntram* has made for me. I shall soon come to think of myself as a real criminal. Yes, yes, people are willing to pardon anything, even the most impudent lies, but not the act of writing a work in accordance with the heart's dictates."

Referring to the first and only performance in Munich, Max Steinitzer relates that "the orchestra was against the opera, yet, from a sense of duty, played as well as it could. After the second and the third act there were loud calls for the composer, who no longer had complete faith in his work."

Although *Guntram* was subsequently performed also in Frankfort and Prague, it did not anywhere augment Strauss's fame. His tone poems, however, and his

songs were becoming more and more popular, and during his second Munich engagement, which lasted till October, 1898, his achievement as a conscientious and stirring conductor of modern as well as classical works also made him a welcome musical guest everywhere. He was invited to conduct at music festivals in the leading cities of Europe, and also went on concert tours of his own, which were usually successful from every point of view.

In the season 1894–1895 he began to make regular trips to Berlin to conduct the concerts of the Philharmonic Orchestra as successor of Bülow; and with this orchestra he subsequently earned laurels in all European countries as composer as well as conductor, his own tone poems being featured on the programs in unmistakable compliance with the wishes of the public.

During the second Munich engagement, the list of tone poems was increased by *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks, Thus Spake Zarathustra,* and *Don Quixote;* all of these, being even more extravagantly Straussian than their predecessors, were violently assailed by most of the critics wherever they were played; and thus it came about that Strauss soon found himself the most conspicuous personality in the musical world.

For advertising purposes violent abuse — provided there is plenty of it — is more effective than superlative praise. Most persons do not distinguish between notoriety and fame, and many are as eager to see a musical criminal as any other kind. Consequently, the concert halls were crowded whenever a new work by this bold, bad man was performed.

XII

BUSY YEARS IN BERLIN

The reference made a moment ago to Strauss's uncle, Georg Pschorr, was not a misprint or a slip of the pen. Richard Strauss is the nephew as well as the grandson of Georg Pschorr. The elder Georg was a man in comfortable circumstances but he was not, like his son of the same name, a millionaire. His daughter, who married Franz Strauss, did not inherit a fortune. If Richard Strauss is perhaps the wealthiest composer Germany ever had, this is due chiefly to his own energy, good luck, and business instinct.

He has obtained surprisingly large sums from the publishers for his tone poems; his operas (of which more anon) brought him vast royalties; and for every new song — good, bad, or indifferent — he gets two hundred dollars, or just one thousand times as much as Schubert got, in the last year of his life, for one of his best songs.

Until the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, backed up by a mob of millionaires, began to compete, Berlin enjoyed hearing the world's greatest singers, such as Lilli Lehmann, Emmy Destinn, Geraldine Farrar, Frieda Hempel, because no other German city — not even Munich with its summer festivals — could afford to pay equally high salaries. Naturally, Berlin also wanted the most famous of the orchestral conductors, and thus it came about that Strauss was engaged at the Royal Opera, beginning with November, 1898.

It is not likely that the larger emoluments offered by Berlin would have tempted Strauss away from

Munich had other things been equal. But his native city had not been particularly hospitable to him, nor could it afford to allow him so much leave of absence as he got in Berlin; and this was a matter of very great importance to him; for his concert tours, as just related, were not only profitable but gave him excellent opportunities for spreading the gospel of Straussism throughout Europe. Under his own direction his complicated and very difficult scores were not subject to misinterpretation.

A mere enumeration of the numerous Strauss festivals, some of which lasted a week, and the concert tours undertaken by Strauss since he made Berlin his home, with mention of all the cities visited, would take up several pages of this book. As such a list would be neither entertaining nor instructive, this very important phase of his activity may be summed up by saying that one week we read of his giving concerts in Russia, the next in France, England, or Spain. When *Salome*, *Elektra*, and the *Rosenkavalier* added so enormously to his fame, he had still further reasons for traveling from one end of Europe to the other; indeed, he could not begin to accept all the invitations that came to him.

Paris was most hospitable to his operas, thoroughly un-French though they are; and London went through several Strauss crazes. Ernest Newman devotes pages 22 to 26 of his excellent little book on Strauss to an account of his gradual conquest of England.

In Berlin itself, oddly enough, Strauss had comparatively few opportunities to preach his gospel. Berlin is really an even more conservative city than Munich. In my Wagner biography I devoted many pages to the amazing struggle, lasting for years, which

the present idol of the German public had to make to gain a foothold in that city, even though the aged Emperor William I took sufficient interest in his activities to personally attend the first festival at Bayreuth.

The present Emperor thinks Wagner's music is too noisy, and has often expressed his preference for the still small voice of Gluck. Needless to say, Strauss is still less to his taste. But as he always liked to have the great men of the Empire about him, he did not oppose his engagement. On one occasion the Kaiser, in commenting on Strauss's radicalism to Schuch, of Dresden (who conducted most of the premières of Strauss's operas), added humorously: "That's a fine snake I have been warming in my bosom," which led to Strauss's being nicknamed the *Hofbusenschlange* (or Court bosom snake).

There was one kind of noisy music which the Kaiser liked — military marches, to which he sometimes listened by the hour. When Strauss wrote several compositions of this class, including a *Königsmarsch*, the Kaiser accepted the dedication and conferred on Strauss the *Kronenorden*, third class.

It was not the Kaiser's fault that Strauss for some years had little opportunity to assert himself in the concert halls of Berlin. Felix von Weingartner and Arthur Nikisch conducted the concerts of the two leading orchestras, and Strauss had to expend a great deal of time and labor before he could train an organization of his own — the Tonkünstlerorchester — to carry out his plans satisfactorily.

The most important of these plans was a series of Modern Concerts at which he produced not only his compositions but all the symphonic poems of his

idol, Liszt, in chronological order. These he interpreted with such sympathetic insight that, as Steinitzer relates, even *Hamlet*, which had previously been coldly received, was honored with stormy applause: thus proving once more that no composer is more popular in concert halls than Liszt, providing his works are conducted by men like Strauss, Seidl, or Josef Stransky, who bring out the true inwardness of these rhapsodic works, as Paderewski does that of the Hungarian rhapsodies.

Strauss had heard Paderewski's delightful opera, *Manru*, and was so much pleased with it that he played excerpts from it at these Modern Concerts. From Boston he imported a composition by Loeffler. England was represented by Stanford and Elgar; Russia by Tchaikovsky; France by Charpentier, D'Indy, Bruneau; while among the Teutonic composers for whom he did missionary work were his friend Ritter, Bruckner, Pfitzner, Schilling, Wolf, Hausegger, Reznicek, Thuille, Huber.

Before Richard Strauss became famous, *the* Strauss was Johann, the Waltz King. Him Richard admires, as much as Wagner and Brahms admired him, and he took as much pleasure in conducting his tuneful *Fledermaus* as he did in presiding, at the Royal Opera, over the operas of Wagner, Weber, Mozart, Verdi, Gluck, Auber, and others.

Concerning other spheres of his activity, as editor, as writer of letters to the press, as president of associations for promoting the cause of modern music and helping German composers to the royalties due them, more will be said in Part II of this work.

All these things would have sufficed to keep an ordinary man busy more than eight hours a day (for

a brain worker five are enough); but Strauss is a man of extraordinary energy.

In the first ten years of his Berlin engagement he composed and produced two more mammoth tone poems. *Heldenleben* (1908), and *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903); three operas: *Feuersnot* (1899), *Salome* (1903), *Elektra* (1906–1908); and a number of songs and choral works. *Der Rosenkavalier* followed in 1909–1910; *Ariadne auf Naxos* in 1911–1912; the *Josef's Legende* in 1913; while the *Alpensymphonie* and the last opera, *His Wife's Shadow*, bring us up to the date of this book.

XIII

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN TONES

One of the most interesting things about three of the works just named: *Heldenleben*, *Sinfonia Domestica*, and *Feuersnot*, is that they are autobiographic.

Sir George Grove once declared that Schubert was the only modest composer he knew of. There have been others, but Richard Strauss is not one of them. He himself is, without disguise, the subject of his *Heldenleben* (Life of a Hero). To make the point quite obvious, he introduces a number of themes from his earlier works. The fact that these works were violently abused by the critics makes him try to get even with them in pages in which he swears at them in the most violently cacophonic clashes of sounds. For details see the chapter on the tone poems.

Equally egotistic is the *Domestic Symphony*, in which Strauss, with astounding naïveté, undertakes to relate the doings of a day and night in his household, consisting of papa, mamma, and baby. To set forth

these simple, peaceful doings he uses an orchestra of over a hundred players; and the time required to tell the story is forty-five minutes!

In the opera *Feuersnot* he again introduces himself, this time in a satirical spirit, of which more anon. Ernest Newman has happily summed up the matter in one short sentence. Strauss, he says, has used this opera "as a mouthpiece for his own feeling of soreness at the comparative neglect that had been his lot in his own native city of Munich."

XIV

THREE OPERATIC SENSATIONS

While *Feuersnot* was not a success, the next three operas, *Salome*, *Elektra*, and *Der Rosenkavalier* made Strauss for a time the rival of Wagner and Puccini in the number of performances accorded his productions in the theaters of not only Germany, but of France, England, and even Italy.

Salome owed its sensational success much less to its music than to its subject. The play of Oscar Wilde had an amazing vogue in the German theaters when Strauss set it to music, and this is by no means the first and only instance of a successful opera based on a popular play. The objectionable features in the libretto which caused his opera to be "edited" in London and banished from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York after a single performance, served, of course, as an invaluable advertisement of it elsewhere.

Its first performance was in Dresden, on December 9, 1905. In spite of the great difficulty of the vocal

parts and the orchestral score, dozens of other opera houses promptly staged it, and the royalties soon began to swell its composer's bank accounts at such a rate that he might have rested on his laurels for the rest of his life. But he did not.

On January 25, 1909, there was another sensational première at Dresden, this time of *Elektra*. In this opera all the peculiarities of Strauss, especially his mania for needless dissonances and excessive polyphonic complexity, as well as his disregard for the possibilities of vocal achievement, reached a climax which alarmed even his devoted followers and made them wonder "What next?"

As usual, Strauss was ready with a new surprise. Realizing that even he could not travel any farther in the tonal jungles and marches into which he had led the music drama, he announced that his next work would be a light comic opera "in the style of Mozart." He should have said the style of Schubert, for *valses à la* Schubert play a prominent part in this comic opera which, under the name of *Der Rosenkavalier*, had its first hearing on January 26, 1911.

Dresden was again the first to get acquainted with the new work, but for a time it seemed as if some other city would have to claim the honor. The intendant of the Royal Opera was, of course, eager to launch this comic opera, which was sure to prove another sensational success; but Strauss stipulated that in return for the right to the first night of the novelty, the Royal Opera must sign a contract providing for at least four annual performances each of *Salome* and *Elektra* for ten years; and at this condition the management balked.

Strauss wrote a long and diplomatic letter in which

he tried to explain his attitude. It was printed in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* for October 9, 1910. He succeeded in smoothing over matters, but the fact that at his own chosen headquarters they refused to promise a paltry four performances a year of two operas which, when first launched, were sensationally successful, was not a good advertisement for Strauss. It gave him, in fact, a black eye, both as a composer and a business man. Intoxicated by success, he had evidently overreached himself. People began to ask themselves: "Are his successes so ephemeral?"

Der Rosenkavalier, however, did not suffer in the least from this embarrassing situation. It proved an even greater success than *Salome* and *Elektra;* and, what is better, a more lasting one. In Germany it has taken the favored place, among his operas, of *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, and *Eulenspiegel* among his tone poems.

XV

TWO MORE SURPRISES

Again the friends of Strauss, and the foes no less, began to wonder what was to be the next surprise. The answer came in 1912, when the smaller auditorium of the new Stuttgart Opera House was opened with performances (on October 24 and 25, the second under Strauss himself) of his latest creation, a one-act opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, preceded by a Molière comedy, with incidental music by Strauss.

It was an absurd combination, making much too long an entertainment (as was realized too late at the rehearsals) and requiring an array of good actors as well as singers (both solo and ensemble) that a manager

could hope to get together only under exceptional circumstances. Not the least of the curiosities of this combination show was the orchestra, which, instead of being of the usual prescribed mammoth proportions, consisted of only thirty-five instruments, all of which had parts so difficult that only soloists could perform them.

The vocal parts furthermore call for no fewer than ten singers, who have to be musicians and artists as well as vocalists; and, most surprising of all, one of these singers disports herself in the most dazzling fioriture — breakneck embellishments that out-Rossini Donizetti. And this in an opera by one who, in his preceding works, had subordinated the voice in every way to the orchestra!

Those who had asked "What next?" had their answer. With increasing tension they once more asked the question, and once more Strauss rose to the occasion. His next work was an opera without words — in other words, a musical pantomime, entitled *Josefs Legende*, which he wrote for Nijinski and the Ballet Russe, and which had its first performance in Paris, on May 14, 1914. It was not at all surprising that he should compose such a work; he had had the plan for one in his mind for years, and there are those who think this kind of stage entertainment has a great future. Details will be given in their proper place, in Part V.

After devoting fourteen years (1899–1913), apart from the *Sinfonia Domestica* and some vocal compositions, to the dramatic stage, Strauss returned, in 1915, to the concert hall with his *Alpensymphonie*. Let us now consider his personality.

PART II

PERSONAL TRAITS
AND
ANECDOTES

In reviewing the uneventful yet interesting story of Strauss's life, one cannot but be struck by the fact that his most outstanding characteristic is energy.

We have seen that while still in his teens he composed about a hundred works of diverse kinds, which he did not consider of sufficient importance for the printer but which involved a great deal of hard work. The decade 1876–1886 includes instrumental works and groups of songs, which do have opus numbers, yet are not likely to live. The three decades from 1887 to 1916 represent the *ipsissime* Strauss who, from the *Italian Fantasy* to the *Alpensymphonie*, is "different." It includes, besides many songs and smaller works, nine symphonic poems — most of them as long and elaborate as symphonies — six operas, and a pantomimic ballet.

Besides composing these works — mostly marvels of complexity — he spent a vast amount of time and energy in rehearsing and conducting them, with most of the great European orchestras, not to speak of recital tours with his wife or Doctor Wüllner, or other singers. And there were many other calls on his time and energy, as we shall see.

I

AS LETTER WRITER AND EDITOR

While Richard Strauss, unlike his two idols, Wagner and Liszt, has not put forth volumes of essays on musical and other topics, he has written plenty of articles and letters to the press which, if collected,

would make a good-sized volume. Such a volume was indeed, contemplated shortly before the great war but has been delayed, like so many other good things; for a good thing it would be, revealing the writer perhaps more consistently in a favorable light than his compositions and their subjects.

Many of his letters to the press are as vivid in style and as trenchant as the writings, public and private, of his patron and friend, Hans von Bülow. Thanks to his principal biographer, Max Steinitzer, who was his classmate and has therefore had unusual opportunities, we have also been favored with fascinating extracts from his letters to Bülow, Thuille, and others. These extracts from letters, combined with those made public in the writings of Arthur Seidl, Richard Batka, and other writers, indicate that another treat is in store when the complete Strauss letters get into print.

In spite of the fact that he had (as he remarked in an article contributed to the periodical *Morgen*, June 14, 1907), "an almost unconquerable aversion to literary work", he nevertheless at one time (during his second engagement in Munich) contemplated joining Schillings and others in establishing and editing a progressive musical periodical, but the plan was not carried through.

Some years late he accepted the editorship of a series of biographies issued under the general title "Die Musik." To the first of these volumes, Göllerich's "Beethoven," he contributed a long intrduction. He also wrote an interesting introduction to a volume of essays by the famous Berlin critic, Leopold Schmidt, entitled "Aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart."

In this introduction he discusses, among other things, his relations to critics: "I know of nothing more

helpful to a writer than the criticisms of a deadly enemy, who deliberately listens with the intention of finding as many flaws as possible! The keener his intellect, the less likely he is to overlook the most recondite weaknesses, which are disregarded, consciously or unconsciously, by the enthusiasts as well as those who are merely sympathetic or good-natured. Now since, as everybody knows, it is more difficult for the author than for any one else to recognize his own shortcomings, it is clear that a deadly enemy is useful because he promotes self-criticism in those who are likely at all to indulge in it.

"It is another truism that all really great works, however new and unusual they may be in form and content, may serenely face unfavorable comment as well as dispense with praise. I often smile to myself when colleagues who are more sensitive than I am are thrown into a state of great excitement when their works do not meet with the critical approval they had expected. Think of the damage which Hanslick's attacks on Wagner were fabled to have done!" [1]

II

PROGRESS IN MUSIC

While Strauss was editor of *Der Morgen* he wrote for it an article "Is There a Party of Progress in Music?" of which the following condensed translation appeared in *Musical America:*

[1] Doctor Hanslick's attacks, nevertheless, did retard the appreciation of Wagner's works, while Strauss was helped by the assaults made on him. Newspaper readers, remembering how unmercifully Wagner was drubbed, naturally inferred that Strauss, too, might be the innocent victim of journalistic intrigue and malevolence.

Alexander Ritter once told me that when Liszt, about fifty years ago, gave for the first time three concerts in Dresden with programs containing orchestral works of his own, the performance of some of his symphonic poems aroused tremendous enthusiasm on the part of an audience which was without prejudice against these new works. The next morning the papers said that Liszt could not be called a composer at all; whereupon the good people who on the preceding evening had given free vent to their enthusiasm were suddenly ashamed of it; no one would admit he had applauded and every one had a thousand buts and ifs. But whatsoever is great can at the worst be kept from its triumphant success only temporarily by the men of darkness, and thus the great public has exalted Liszt, too, above the malice and ignorance of his enemies, even as it helped Wagner by its enthusiasm in 1876 to triumph over the carpers and the envious.

The moral of all this is, as Strauss goes on to intimate broadly, that it is foolish to criticize him.

Reactionaries of an insufferable sort are, in my view, those who maintain that because Wagner got his subjects from German mythology, therefore no one is to be allowed thenceforth to get subjects from the Bible (I speak, of course, pro domo); or those who teach that it is vulgar to use a valve trumpet for melody — for no other reason than because Beethoven was obliged to confine his natural-trumpet players to tonic and dominant; in short, all those who, armed with big law tablets, hurl an anathema, hit at every one who endeavors to create something new and try to hinder him in his efforts.

One must not permit oneself to be deceived by the fact that the self-same public often grows ecstatic over the accidental, the commonplace and the trite as something entirely new, original and progressive. These outbursts are, moreover, usually of a passing nature. The public has really two souls in the breast; a third is, indeed, lacking; for that kind of art which possesses neither deep, inner feeling nor a commanding, overmastering strength the public has the smallest possible understanding and still

less inclination. Hence so many disappointments of earnest, hard-working artists whom even their adversaries cannot charge with triviality while their friends admit that they do not possess suggestive power enough to capture the public.

Weber once said of the great public: "The individual is an ass, but the whole is, nevertheless, the voice of God." And indeed, the soul of the thousand headed public which appears in our theaters and concert halls for an evening's artistic enjoyment will, as a rule, instinctively get a true appreciation of what is presented — provided, however, that a fussy criticism or a busy competition does not interfere.

Displeased with the critics of the German press, who have seldom been friendly to musical novelties and innovations, Strauss usually has given his writings a controversial character, with occasional flashes of irony or satire, especially when referring to Doctor Hanslick and other would-be "guardians of the eternal laws of beauty", which he and other moderns were accused of violating.

III

HELPING HUMPERDINCK AND OTHERS

Richard Strauss is not altogether a selfish man, as many seem to think. On the contrary, one of the several ways in which he followed in the footsteps of Liszt has been his readiness to champion the cause of his colleagues and promote their interests, even when they really were his rivals. He censured the musical journalists for their habit of bestowing superfluous praise on the admittedly great masters while dwelling on the shortcomings of minor composers, instead of calling attention to the undeniable flashes of genius to be found in many of these.

One day, at the opera, as Steinitzer relates, Strauss explained this point of view to the Kaiser, who had summoned him to his box, during an intermission. "He added that those talents of the second rank had a hard struggle for existence, all the more as the German composers did not know so well how to show their works to advantage as the more experienced French did."

Practising what he preached, he gave, as we have seen, the names of the less favored composers a prominent place on the programs of his Modern Concerts in Berlin. These concerts, it is needless to say, were not profitable. Strauss gave them by way of preaching progressive principles and helping composers who had not had their fair share of attention. Wherefore he did not grudge the vast amount of time and energy he expended on them. The deficits, to be sure, were paid by a wealthy friend.

One of the most interesting episodes in his career is due to this commendable habit of trying to discover merit in obscure musicians. It led to the discovery of a real genius — the composer of *Hänsel and Gretel* and *Königskinder*.

When Humperdinck was teaching music at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt for a mere pittance, he amused himself by composing a fairy opera for his children. Urged by friends he sent the score to Richard Strauss, who promptly replied in a letter dated Weimar, October 30, 1893:

Dear Friend: I have just looked through the score of your *Hänsel and Gretel* and sit down at once to try to tell you how greatly your work has delighted me. Truly, it is a masterwork of the highest quality, on the completion of which I offer you my heartiest congratulations. Here, for

the first time in a long while, is a composition that makes a deep impression on me. What refreshing humor, what preciously naïve melodic art, what skill and subtlety in the treatment of the orchestra, what perfect art in the shaping of the whole work, what rich invention, what splendid polyphony — and everything original, new, and thoroughly German. My dear friend, you are a great master who has bestowed on the dear Germans a work which they hardly deserve, but which I hope they will soon learn to appraise at its full value. Should this not come to pass, accept at any rate, from a true friend and sympathizer the warmest gratitude for the pleasure you have given him.

The Germans *did* soon learn to appreciate this glorious work at its true value — thanks to Strauss, who brought it out two months later, under his own direction, at Weimar, whence it immediately spread like a prairie fire all over the Empire. In a few months Humperdinck was a wealthy man.

Anything more unlike the merry pranks of *Till Eulenspiegel*, which Strauss was incubating about this time, than *Hänsel and Gretel*, it would be difficult to imagine. But Strauss had always been most cosmopolitan in taste. He, the most complicated and cacophonous of composers, adores the simplicity, tunefulness, and euphony of Mozart.

In England he won the good will of many by what Alfred Kalish calls "his almost impassioned advocacy of Elgar in the days when England had not yet learned to admire the *Dream of Gerontius*. His remarks in his speech at the banquet after the Lower Rhenish Festival at Düsseldorf in 1902 were no mere idle after-dinner talk. . . . At that time hardly any English authority had dared to speak so enthusiastically of Elgar and his work."

IV

THE FIGHT FOR ROYALTIES

Another way in which Strauss helped contemporary composers was as president of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein, in which capacity he once more trod in the footsteps of Liszt, who had (in 1861) founded this association for the advancement of modern music by means of annual festivals.

An amusing detail is the circumstance that Strauss was elected president of this association in 1901, as successor to Fritz Steinbach, who had displeased the members by putting the names of conservative composers like Brahms and Max Bruch on his programs. The paradoxical information is given by Steinitzer that it was Steinbach who first made Brahms palatable to the Munichers by interpreting him in the Wagnerian manner!

Under the presidency of Richard Strauss (until 1909), no names of conservatives were smuggled into the programs of the Musikverein festivals. There were plenty and to spare of the progressives: they contributed every year some two hundred manuscripts on approval. Even Strauss, with his rare energy, could not undertake to read and judge these manuscripts, and this was fortunate for him, in view of the abundant opportunities he had otherwise of exercising the "gentle art of making enemies."

For a time he incurred the enmity of even the progressive composers by his strenuous efforts to help them to what few of them had in abundance — royalties. This paradox calls for an explanation.

In France there has long existed an association for securing to composers and other creative artists

royalties on the public performances of their pieces or songs. Grieg once told me how he had been asked to join this association and how glad he was he had accepted the invitation, because in a short time he received a check for twelve hundred francs; which illustrates the advantages of this plan.

In order to help German composers to similar advantages, Strauss became one of the founders, in 1898, of the Genossenschaft Deutscher Tonsetzer. They surely needed such assistance, for never have men been so shamelessly exploited as the composers of Germany. Bach's widow died in a poorhouse. Mozart was buried in a grave with several other paupers. What Schubert left when he died was not worth one gold piece. Weber's *Freischütz*, which enriched hundreds of managers, singers, and publishers, netted him only a few hundred. Even Wagner did not earn one dollar for every thousand that others got from his operas. Strauss helped to put an end to this unjust state of affairs.

He did not need the help of a "Genossenschaft" to secure royalties for himself, for he has ways of his own of getting his dues. His labors along this line were therefore purely altruistic; yet they met with so much opposition on the part not only of publishers, managers, and artists, but of the composers themselves — including some of his closest friends — that he regretted more than once having ever undertaken this job, which caused him much annoyance and compelled him to write scores of letters, both private and public, when he would have preferred writing musical scores.

It must be admitted that there are two sides to this question. Composers whose works are not impera-

tively demanded by the public may naturally fear that if they ask for royalties on their performance the singers and players may refuse to produce them; and it is well known that (particularly in England) publishers and authors in many instances actually pay the performers for producing their works and thus advertising them. On the whole, however, the royalty plan, as forced on his colleagues by Strauss, seems to be best. At any rate, Steinitzer assures us that the opposition to this plan has nearly vanished because of the hundreds of thousands it distributes every year among the composers.

V

AS PRIMA DONNA CONDUCTOR

Time was when most operas were prima donna operas; that is, they were composed for the special purpose of giving famous singers opportunities to display their beautiful voices and dazzling *bravura*. Gradually as Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Wagner, Verdi, Gounod, Bizet, and other masters assigned a more important function to the orchestra than that of a "huge guitar", the conductors became more and more prominent; until a climax was reached at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, where Arturo Toscanini had the audacity to attempt — and with considerable success — to make himself and his orchestra seem more important than the world-famed artists singing under him; for which astonishing achievement he received one thousand dollars a performance. The most spoilt favorite of the public never had her way more completely than he did, and

the wits had reason for referring to him sarcastically as "the last of the prima donnas."

Theodore Thomas once conducted the *Messiah* with Adelina Patti in one of the solo parts. When he objected to her way of rendering a certain passage, she remarked sharply that, as the prima donna of the occasion, she had a right to follow her own ideas of interpretation; upon which he replied: "Beg pardon, Madam, but here *I* am prima donna."

To-day the expression "prima donna conductor" is applied to all orchestral leaders who, following the example of Wagner, Liszt, Bülow, Hans Richter, and Anton Seidl, interpret operas and concert pieces subjectively — as Paderewski plays the piano, and as Liszt and Rubinstein played it; that is, they do not read the lines literally and mechanically, but color them with nuances that give them an individual aspect.

While some critics foolishly attack the prima donna conductors, the public quite properly adores them, because they add a new interest to familiar works, just as great actors do to Shakespearean and other rôles by their individual readings and gestures.

This explains why managers, owing to growing competition, are compelled to make their offers to these popular conductors larger and larger. Arthur Nikisch must earn at least twenty-five thousand dollars a year by his activity in a dozen European cities, and in the United States such conductors as Dr. Muck and Josef Stransky earn even larger sums.

Of all the prima donna conductors none has been in such demand as Richard Strauss, to whose extraordinary activity in this direction — on one occasion thirty-one concerts in thirty-one days — reference has

already been made. This activity has been, for a quarter of a century, one of the main sources of the wealth he has achieved, as well as of his fame.

In one respect Strauss is unlike some, at any rate, of the prima donna conductors. He does not pose, does not try to show off his skill and his grace as prima donnas love to show off their personal attractions.

His appearance on the stage is thus sketched by Doctor Erich Urban in his brochure *Strauss Contra Wagner:*

> A feast for the eyes his beating of the bâton is not. He declines to enter into competition with fashionable conductors — to curl a languishing lock on his pale forehead, or to paint mystic figures in the air with his magic white hands. His movements are hard and angular. An increase of power he indicates by a hasty bending of his knee joints. He hovers with outspread arms over the orchestra, like a spider over its prey. He has his players so firmly in his power, has penetrated them so completely, that he has achieved the wonder of imposing his conception of a piece of music on so overworked an organization as the Berlin Philharmonic in a single rehearsal.

Grieg once spoke of Strauss as "the man who conducts with his knees", and Steinitzer relates that in his Weimar days he indulged in lively gesticulations and sweeping movements of the arms; but in later years his signals for increase or decrease of loudness became more and more simple and reserved. But he never changed the principles of interpretation in the style of Wagner and Liszt, as taught him in Weimar by Bülow. To this mentor he wrote in October, 1887: "A charming new acquaintance I have made in Mahler, who appears to be a highly intelligent musician; one of the few modern conductors who know about modifications of *tempo*. Altogether his views are splendid,

especially those that refer to Wagner's *tempi* (as against those of the now approved Mozart conductors)."

In the pages relating to Strauss's activity in Munich, reference was made to the difficulty he had in overcoming the traditional but by no means correct readings of classical works. Ignorant conservatives who followed the letter instead of the spirit advised him to be "objective", especially in the interpretation of Beethoven; which made him remark one day to Ritter: "If I only knew how to go about this business of conducting 'objectively'; I really haven't the faintest idea what I should do."

Perhaps from no other point of view does Strauss's character appear in a more favorable light than in that of conductor. I remember reading in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* about his great successor in Munich: "As is well-known, Herr Mottl is a great conductor — when he feels like it." Strauss, apparently, always "feels like it." He was often distressed by the lack of thorough rehearsing in some of the leading German cities, and shirked no amount of hard work to do justice to whatever he undertook.

An amusing illustration of his seriousness and whole-souled devotion to his work was given at a *Tannhäuser* rehearsal in Weimar when he threatened the chorus that he would hurl his bâton right in their midst if they did not do better at the public performance.

Strauss enthusiasts claim that there would be fewer who doubt his genius if all could hear him conduct his own works. Naturally enough, he brings out details that show his intentions in the brightest light. No other conductor, except perhaps Josef Stransky, at the head of the New York Philharmonic, has ever impressed me so favorably with the reading

of a tone poem by Strauss as did Strauss himself when, in New York, he conducted the first performance anywhere of his *Sinfonia Domestica.* While I did not like the *Sinfonia,* I was thrilled by his handling of the vast orchestral masses, and the novel sound effects, especially in the brass choir.

VI

HOW STRAUSS KEPT HIS HEALTH

With all the exhausting work done by Strauss, how did he manage to preserve his health? In appearance he is anything but robust, yet he has had only one serious illness, and, as already related, he utilized the period of convalescence from it to write a long opera instead of resting.

In Hausegger's biography of Alexander Ritter, we find this snapshot: "With deep concern Ritter heard of his friend's illness. Daily he asked for reports. He advised him to give up all mental activity, but in doing so forgot to take into account the rapid recuperative power of this temperamental individual. From the sick-bed came this reply: 'You want me to unhitch my mind? Dear Uncle Ritter, you'll have to teach me how to do that when I get back to Munich. I don't know how to begin. How can I repress my thoughts which in the very first days of my recovery already performed for me by memory half an act of *Tristan* at a time? Altogether, I cannot imagine myself without mental occupation.'"

After his record tour of thirty-one concerts in as many days he is said to have been far from exhausted. How did he contrive to conserve his vitality?

His German biographer reveals the secret. Strauss learned at an early age the important art of mental relaxation. "Immediately after completing one of his mammoth tasks as composer or conductor he has the ability to arrest the activity of the higher brain centres and to devote himself with complete attention to a cosy game of skat. (He did this for instance, on his way from Dresden to Berlin at ten o'clock on the morning after the surely most exciting première of *Salome*.) And it is known that after a performance he does not mentally 'continue to conduct' but plays his cards very well, as many of those who play with him remember to their cost."

His love of cards dates back to his school days; and a game of skat has been throughout his life the most effective way of arresting creative activity when not desired.

VII

A TALK WITH WILLIAM ARMSTRONG

In Bayreuth, during the *Parsifal* festival, I met a New York journalist who had made up his mind to secure an interview with Wagner. Knowing that the great man took a walk daily in the park behind his house, he boldly accosted him one afternoon, but was curtly told to "get out"; whereupon the journalist proceeded to collect information about Wagner's habits and views from his neighbors and the tradesmen who supplied his needs, all of which he presented as utterances of the great Richard, thus making a very entertaining and quite informative "interview", which, to be sure, discreetly omitted the few words actually spoken by Wagner.

Richard Strauss has been more accessible to newspaper reporters, some of whom have been able to give vivid sketches of his personality and his views. Extracts from a few of them follow. The first appeared in Theodore Presser's musical magazine *The Étude* and was written by the well-known critic, William Armstrong, who says:

The face of Richard Strauss is a combination of strength and weakness. The strength lies in the noble development of the forehead, and the weakness in the chin and jaw, quite feminine in outline and curious by contrast with the upper part of the face. His eyes are full of the poetry of his mind. Large, grayish blue in color, and set far apart, they show high development of the imaginative faculties. They are absolutely frank, and there is an expression of the ideal in them that nothing would have the power to disturb.

It was at 6 o'clock in the evening, and at the house of Mr. Speyer, the London banker, which had been placed at his disposal during his stay in the metropolis to conduct the Strauss festival, that I met him, for *The Étude*. The day had been spent in rehearsal; it would presently be time to dress for the concert. With an active, springy step he came down the stairs, hurrying into the room. Tall and angular, his clothes hang on him in a characterless way. His brown hair is thin to the point of baldness, his manner is of a simple dignity that impresses itself.

Of his compositions he spoke reluctantly; on that subject his staunch advocate, Mr. Willem Mengelberg, conductor of the Amsterdam orchestra, and his assistant in the festival, spoke at length to me later, and as a student enthusiastic on his theme.

"My composing is done in the afternoon and evening", said Mr. Strauss, "and I keep it up until one or two o'clock in the morning. But it never leaves me nervous; that is a strange thing about it. When I finish, my mind seems absolutely free from a thought of it, and I go to sleep immediately.

"But I need the calm and quiet of the country to write in, so the major part of my work is done in the summertime. In Berlin I have too much else to do; the stress is too great to make it possible to compose; I score my work there, but I cannot compose. That would be impossible.

"My work in composition means not revolution but evolution, and evolution built on the classics which must be the foundation of all musical composition.

"My compositions are built on classical lines; all real music must be. I believe in the old masters; for Mozart especially I have a great love.

"We have composers in Germany today," Strauss asserted, "but the difficulty is that the picture of Wagner is so great that it dwarfs all others. His breadth, his power, and his forcefulness overshadow by contrast. But we have our smaller composers, nevertheless. There are Mahler, Schilling, von Hausegger, Pfitzner, Humperdinck and others."

In his interest to have mention of some of his colleagues he took my notebook, and himself wrote their names.

"Where do I think the chief difficulty in interpreting my compositions lies? In this — a lack of sense of humor. Humor is generally the last quality an orchestral conductor has. Look at Beethoven, how full of humor he is in his Fourth and Eighth Symphonies! But how few conductors look for humor in Beethoven, and yet he is so full of humor!

"Shall I follow my plan of setting other poems to music for recitation as I have done in 'Enoch Arden'? No, scarcely. That was merely a side issue. Such things can be done with a piano or very small orchestra. The theory that Madame Bernhardt has advanced, for instance, that an entire play be scored with the speaking voice is impossible, nor could any such revolution come, for the reason that no speaking voice could be sustained against an orchestra. Only the singing voice will accomplish that.

"The first of my compositions to be played in America, my First Symphony, was done from the manuscript by Mr. Theodore Thomas in New York. I was seventeen years old at the time. I have never seen him since that meeting in Munich, when my father took me to see him, and he

accepted the work; but I know that he has generously given my compositions a hearing."

As he talked, his simplicity and sincerity grew in the impression that they made. In one sense he is, apparently, among the few — he recognizes thoroughly the place he holds in musical art, his value he knows fully and completely, but as a man associating with other men he is as other men are.

His manner toward an orchestra in rehearsal is calculated to be particularly grateful to the men. If a thing is well done he makes recognition of it as soon as the final chord is sounded. If a player does a solo well, even though it be a short one, he steps down from the desk and shakes hands with him when the piece is ended.

Turning presently to his songs, Strauss, in reply to a question as to the sequence in which they should be taken up in study, said: "Even the easiest are difficult; they are for singers already accomplished."

VIII

AT HIS BAVARIAN COUNTRY HOME

At the time when Strauss was composing his *Rosenkavalier*, he granted an interview to the American composer, Ward Stephens, who has told of his visit in the *Pictorial Review*. Strauss was spending the summer, as usual, in the picturesque Bavarian village Garmisch.

A few minutes after nine, Mr. Stephens writes, with my camera under my arm, I started for my man, and after a brisk fifteen minutes' walk I came to the very end of the town — and Doctor Strauss's house is to all appearances the end of the town. His house was a surprise to me; the change in architecture was startling. I had been walking through streets with little two-storied houses, graceful balconies and picturesque overhanging roofs and enjoying a decidedly foreign atmosphere, when I was suddenly con-

STRAUSS IN HIS STUDY

STRAUSS VILLA AT GARMISCH

fronted with a house, grounds and fence which might have been put together in America, grounds and all, and shipped to Garmisch and planted there.

At the appointed time I was there "waiting at the gate." In the post, at the left of the gate, was a speaking tube and a brass sign which tells you to ring the bell and then put your ear to the tube. If you "make good" with the party at the other end of the tube you are told that the gate is unlocked. Another sign tells you how to open it and to be sure to close it after you, all of which makes you feel that Herr Strauss must be a very particular man.

The house is about sixty yards from the gate, and half way up the walk I met a very tall boy with an enormous head, big dark brown eyes, black hair and a fine complexion, quite the handsomest face and head I have ever seen on a boy. He looked at me with a peculiar look of inquiry in his eyes, as any tame animal might look at a stranger.

That boy's face haunted me for days. He was the thirteen-year-old son of Doctor Strauss.

A woman, none other than Mrs. Strauss herself, as I afterward learned, dressed in Tyrolean costume, escorted me around the rear of the house and there I saw the man I had come so far to see, the most talked-of musician in the world to-day, seated at a table on a veranda (entirely enclosed in glass), writing the orchestral score of the new opera the *Rosenkavalier*. After an exchange of greeting, he said:

"You see I am very busy and our visit will have to be very short; what can I do for you?"

The look in his eyes, his manner of speech and attitude impressed me at once with frankness, simplicity, directness, energy, and dignity. I assured him that I would not take up much of his valuable time, but would like to have him tell me a few things about himself and his work.

"Well," he said, "what is it you wish to know? Go right on and talk, for I can write this score and talk as well," and for a while he did.

Strauss is a very difficult man to engage in conversation, and it was a little difficult to know just how to get him started, especially with his head full of an orchestral score for an opera.

"Do you feel, Herr Doctor, that you have given to the world your best work or may we look for greater things?"

This seemed to amuse him.

"Why should I feel that way about it? Why, I am only forty-six now and have hardly begun my life's work. In fact, it is only when a man is free from any thought of money matters that he can give all of himself to his art and as I said before that is what I hope to do very soon."

"It is very evident that you do not believe that poverty is a good thing for the artist born?"

"I do not; it frequently crushes the best in a man. Worry alone is enough to kill a sensitive man, and all thoroughly artistic natures are sensitive."

Now I had heard that Strauss was not very indulgent with the struggling composer; in fact, that he refused to even look at manuscript sent to him for inspection. He denied that by saying:

"A great many manuscripts are sent to me, and if I were to give a careful analysis of each one I would have no time left for composing. I do glance through the larger works, and if any real merit shows itself I look through it carefully and return it with a letter, often making suggestions. More than this," he went on to say, "could not be expected of me, as I am not a proof-reader for others."

"You Americans are very clever, you are great money-makers, you buy the best of everything, you buy the best orchestras, you buy the best artists, you buy the best musical works, you build beautiful opera houses and halls for musical entertainments, and with such opportunities of absorbing good music America should give birth to great talent."

You will observe that he was not giving us any credit for what we have to-day.

Now every composer has his own ideas as to which of his compositions is the best. I naturally wanted to know which "son" Strauss considered his best piece of writing, and like most composers he named one of the unpopular ones — *Das Lied des Steinklopfers*, composed in 1902.

"You must have received large royalties for your popular song, *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, I remarked.

"On the contrary, I sold it for thirty shillings, but the publishers made four hundred pounds out of it the first year. However, I fared a little better with my *Domestic Symphony*, for which I was paid seventeen hundred and fifty pounds, nearly nine thousand dollars of your American money."

Doctor Strauss's regard for his family and home life is shown in Mr. Stephen's account of how his wife and son joined him during the conversation.

His voice changed to one of great tenderness when he spoke to his wife and son, and I saw at once that the man was very happy in his domestic life. He became even pleasanter with me and called my attention to the various plants and flowers about the place. He was just like a pleased boy. Strauss is a typical Bavarian and loves Munich, and quite shares the opinion of others who have said "Berlin would be beautiful if there were not so many Prussians in it."

You could easily think that this man has accumulated a fortune to judge by the beautiful house and grounds he had built for himself in Garmisch. He undoubtedly has earned a fortune by his writing, but he has always been surrounded with luxury and has never known what it is to be poor. He loves the society of highly cultured people and does not care to waste any time on others. Dr. Strauss is a very serious man. He takes the world seriously, also himself and his work. I cannot imagine him being companionable for any length of time with one of small intellect, and he can be very sarcastic with the common enthusiast and idol worshipper.

IX

HOW A CRITIC WAS DISARMED

During the *Elektra* days, the eminent German critic, Ludwig Karpath, had two talks with Strauss which he placed on record. The following translation of them was made for *Musical America:*

Whatever one may have to say against Richard Strauss personally, he is the most charming and most modest of men. He never shows that he resents unfavorable criticism of his works. Last year I permitted myself to make, in the Munich *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the modest observation that I was already scared at the prospect of the next Philharmonic concert, at which the *Sinfonia Domestica* was to be played. A few weeks later I saw Strauss at the Café Impérial. "You aren't going to run away from me," the composer called out, and invited me to his table. "Then he doesn't know," I thought, and turned to my coffee. We spent a pleasant hour chatting. Then suddenly the fatal moment arrived. In tones of flute-like sweetness, gentle and soothing, the words fell from his lips: "By the way, I wanted to ask you — you've recovered from your fright at the *Domestica*, haven't you?" I quickly recovered my composure and replied that as it was six weeks ago I was feeling better. Strauss burst into frank, hearty laughter.

On another occasion Strauss had another chat with Karpath. Once more the conversation turned to *Elektra*, and the critic gave his personal impression of the opera which, he observes, was by no means favorable.

And again Strauss disarmed me with his winning amiability. I recalled to him the first performance of *Feuersnot* in Dresden. We were only a few at that *première*. No trace of the crowd of foreigners at the first performance of *Salome* and later at *Elektra*. It was almost a family party, and yet Strauss was a sensation. It was the first work in which Strauss struck new paths. Strauss began to speak, "Now look here," he said; "You must admit that today *Feuersnot* appears quite harmless to you. I am absolutely certain that in my later works I have attained to new formations. When I heard *Tristan* for the first time in my life — and I was a finished musician then — it made on me the impression of complete chaos, in which I could not clearly see my way. And yet today how simple and clear Wagner's masterpiece appears to those who then had

RICHARD STRAUSS AND FAMILY

the same experience as I. It's nonsense to say that I willingly write discords. I cannot cite a single passage in my works that ever seemed to me to be discordant. On the contrary, I sometimes strive to express some phrase or other with unwonted roughness, but I can't."

"Because you're a tonal musician, Doctor," I observed, "for all your daring harmonic extravagances, because you have the art of returning to harmony at the right moment."

"You're quite right. I still regard myself as an adherent of the tonality principle, however much my opponents may deny this. And it is unusually important to seek effects of contrast. In composing one cannot remain continually homophonic or polyphonic. Everything which music requires must assume symphonic form; that is to say must be worked out polyphonically. So that the voice on the stage is also regarded as an integral part of the musical texture. If, however, one is concerned with a portion of the text which is to make some definite event immediately clear to the spectator, one must undoubtedly compose homophonically.

"The first monologue in *Elektra* is an example of this. The effect is certain to be missed if the composition is wholly homophonic or wholly polyphonic. Nothing damaged Liszt's works so much as their consistent homophony, and nothing is more a hindrance to the correct comprehension of Bach than his consistent polyphony. One gets wearied of the one as of the other, for the charm of contrast is lacking.

"If you pretend to take a creative spirit in music in our time seriously, you must not condemn him at once, but you ought first to ask yourself if the composer may not possibly have raced ahead of your faculty of comprehension. There is nothing worse than an obstinate adherence to fixed forms. My own father made this great mistake. Because he thought when he was hornist at the Munich Court Theater in 1885, that he didn't understand Wagner, he refused later on to change his opinion."

X

ALWAYS MAKES MONEY

Strauss has one thing in common with Mascagni: he "always makes money, even when his operas do not", as James Huneker remarked in a page of the New York *Sun* (November 24, 1912) devoted to the Ariadne Festival in Stuttgart. One of the jokes of Strauss, according to the same brilliant writer, "is to make music critics pay for their seats. Screams of agony were heard all over the Continent, as far North as Berlin, as far South as Vienna. A music critic dearly hates to pay for a ticket. Hence the *Till Eulenspiegel* humor of R. Strauss."

The following, from the same article, is characteristic of both Strauss and Huneker:

For Richard Strauss is an extraordinary musician. To begin with, he doesn't look like a disorderly genius with rumpled hair, but is the mildest mannered man who ever scuttled another's score and smoked bad Munich cigars or played 'skat' to the liquid accompaniment of brown Bavarian beer. He resembles less today our esteemed fellow-citizen, August Würzburg Lüchow, inasmuch as he is thinner, yet he doesn't recall in the least his own music. And then he loves money! What other composer, besides Handel, Haydn, Mozart — yes, and also Beethoven — Gluck, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Puccini, so doted on the box office? Why shouldn't he? Why should he enrich the haughty music publisher or the still haughtier intendant of the opera house? As a matter of fact, if R. Strauss is in such a hurry to grow rich (he is already worth over 2,000,000 marks) he would write music of a more popular character. It would seem then that he is a millionaire *malgré lui*, and that no matter what he writes, money flows into his coffers. Indeed an extraordinary man. Despite his spiritual dependence upon Wagner, and, in his Tone Poems, upon Liszt and Berlioz,

he has a very definite musical personality. He has amplified, intensified the Liszt-Wagner music, adding to its stature, also exaggerating it on the purely physical side.

While Strauss's music is based chiefly on Wagner and Liszt, he once said in a Paris interview: "In the main I have endeavored to derive from French music those things which are most wanting in German music, certain airy, graceful, charming *finenesses* as exemplified particularly in the score of *Carmen*, which presents such a strong contrast to the serious, heavy style from which German composers find it difficult to get away."

In another interview, printed in 1910, Strauss said, referring to his Bavarian home at Garmisch:

Here it is easiest to compose and here I prefer to work. I compose everywhere as far as that is concerned — walking or driving, eating or drinking, at home or abroad, in noisy hotels, in my garden, in railway carriages; my sketch book never leaves me, and as soon as a motive strikes me I jot it down. One of the most important melodies for my new opera (*Rosenkavalier*) struck me while I was playing Schafskopf (a national Bavarian card game) with the Upper Twenty in this village. But before I improvise even the smallest sketch for an opera I allow the texts to permeate my thoughts and mature in me for at least six months, so that the situations and characters may be thoroughly assimilated. Then only do I let the musical thought enter my mind. The sub-sketches then become sketches. They are copied out, worked out, arranged for the piano and rearranged as often as four times. That is the hard part of the work. The score I write in my study straightaway, without troubling, working at it twelve hours at a time.

XI

AN ENGLISH PORTRAIT

"Richard Strauss," says a writer in the *London Academy* (February 11, 1905), "does not at first

suggest the typical musician. He is not burly and leonine, as were Beethoven and Rubinstein; neither is he delicate and *chétif* like Chopin or Mozart; but the initial impression, which on nearer acquaintance is fully confirmed, is that of an essentially thinking man whose genius might take the form of literature may be, or perchance painting, but certainly not music."

Rather above the middle height, fair in complexion, with deep-set eyes of a palish blue, short hair over an exceptionally high forehead, a small sandy moustache, a straight, small nose and firm lips. Such is the bare portrait of the man, to which must be added a pair of working but not artistic hands, the fingers spatulate rather than taper, an entire absence of nervousness, a quick decided manner of speaking and an attire which is as neat and unobtrusive as that of a diplomat. Watch him conduct the orchestra at the Berlin Opera. There is no unseemly swaying or ugly contortion, no monkey-tricks of manner, but a firm, decided simple beat, with scarce an indication beyond the use of the bâton. Even the head barely moves, and the torso not at all. There is rather more animation when he conducts a concert orchestra on a platform, but even then the whole figure is self-contained and dignified.

Away from his orchestra, his piano and his scores, Richard Strauss is a strange mixture of frank simplicity and profound depth; a curiously complex individuality, probably the product of an intensely high form of intellectual culture. . . . If you did not know who the man was, you might talk for an hour with Richard Strauss and not know that he was a musician and a genius. You would come away with the impression that you had met an exceptionally well-informed man, conversant with the latest developments of science and politics, well versed in ancient and modern literature, more than commonly interested in painting and sculpture, no stranger to sport, and possessed of a very keen sense of humor; no ordinary man and, indeed, no ordinary musician. . . .

Lastly, an anecdote just to illustrate Strauss's quickness of wit and sense of humor. On one of his visits to London he was entertained at a dinner at which musicians and critics were present. One of them made a speech, long and flattering to fulsomeness, concluding with the sentiment: "Richard Strauss knows all. He is the Buddha of composers." During the applause that followed, Strauss remarked in an undertone to his neighbor: "If I am a musical Buddha, then that last speaker is a musical Pesth!"

Another English writer, Alfred Kalish, relates in Ernest Newman's book that Madam Strauss once said to him concerning her husband: "You may say what you like about his music; but if you don't praise his handwriting he will be cross with you."

"Being himself a man of very wide culture," Mr. Kalish also remarks, "he loves the society of his intellectual equals, and his house in Berlin is the resort of all who are associated with the most advanced movements in art."

XII

WANTED: A SONG

Perhaps there is no living musician who can do so many amusing things unconsciously as Richard Strauss. By appointment, says a writer in the *Musical Leader*, I went one night to meet him at the Berlin Royal Opera where he was conducting the performance. Our talk was in his dressing room during an intermission. A woman's magazine had entrusted me with the mission of securing original compositions by noted men, and the name of Strauss was in the list. When the sum offered for rights only to publish that song in one issue reached him, he grew attentive. Another meeting was arranged with promptness; it would take place at his home. Arriving there he met me; his face was clouded. And I soon knew why. "I signed," he said, "a contract with the publisher who brought out my

Symphonia Domestica to give him the next twelve songs I wrote. He has gotten only two in three years; I don't know when he will get more. You may have the song, but first get his consent."

The publisher proved in even a cloudier mood than Strauss. The songs he had never received were to have helped him out in part for the large sum paid down for the right to publish the *Domestica*, which had not become the household word its title would seem to warrant. "I tell you what I will do," he prefaced, naïvely, "you may have this charming piano arrangement of a march from the *Domestica*. A Strauss song you can never have." After stating the lack of any panting desire for even this *Domestica morceau* in America, I drove back to Strauss. Explaining things, we then sat in silent gloom. Suddenly a light shone in his face. "I know what I can do!" he declared, brightly. "I have some songs composed before I signed that contract. I will play them to you, you may have any one you like." And I selected a song set to words by Burns.

To the telephone Strauss darted; a long argument ensued. The side I heard ended with this clinching statement, "If you don't let me give him the song, you will never get it any way." Beaming, Strauss hung up the receiver to announce briefly, "You may have it."

However, that was not the end. When I arrived next morning with the money, he said casually, "I have only the voice part here; the man copying it doubtless thought that some one wanted to use it in concert. I leave tonight to join my wife in Bavaria, but you can take the original to the Royal Opera Library and have it copied. But I must have the original back."

By dire fate the library in question was that day being moved, perhaps for the first time since its foundation. The copyist, overwhelmed at seeing a world in which he had lived so long vanishing slowly by the cartload, almost tearfully declared that the song could not be copied for a week.

"Tomorrow morning," I insisted, "I leave for Norway to see Grieg. The song must be ready by tonight." At last, but with ill suppressed emotion, he consented; his feelings were doubtless identical with those sustained by

many who failed to own a private ark at the time of Noah's flood — moving and a Strauss song to copy on the same day.

If you have ever lived in the Continental Hotel neighborhood and had to travel to the Frankfurter Allee, as I did that night at ten o'clock, you will need no explanation as to the distance. Besides, the copyist lived five flights of stairs above the street. "Who will pay for this?" he asked, when he had handed me the copied song. "Herr Strauss," I answered promptly. "He has already been paid enough. Until you get your money keep this manuscript. Herr Strauss says he must have it back."

XIII

MORE ANECDOTES

There are many anecdotes about Strauss's close-fistedness. Here is one of them.

"Edyth Walker, Paul Bender, and both the von Bülows of the Munich Opera; Gustav Brecher, of Cologne; Klemperer of Strassburg; Hugo Hoffmansthal; Baron de Ginsburg and his co-director Diaghileff of the Ballet Russe; Raoul Gunsburg of Monte Carlo; Stravinsky and Leo Ornstein, the Russian futurists; Fürstner the publisher, and many other international celebrities as well as *Tout Paris* were present, when Doctor Strauss raised the bâton to conduct at the Paris Opera House the world's *première* of his ballet *La Légende de Joseph.*

"Those from Germany and Italy had travelled many miles to be present at the last rehearsals and the first performance. They all had daily intercourse with Doctor and Mrs. Strauss at the Hotel Majestic on the avenue Kléber. They all knew him well and had come to do him honor. What wonder then, he invited them to an after-theatre supper at La Rue's. Exquisite was the *à la carte* menu. Especially exquisite were some

early giant strawberries and some hothouse peaches freely partaken of, and even more exquisite were the wines recommended by the *maître d'hotel.* Merry and gay was the munching and wine-sipping bunch of people, who all laid claim to be somebody in the musical and literary world. The *additions* ran up to big sums — and when they had supped to their heart's content, there came a veritable *la doloureuse,* as the bill is jocularly termed by Parisians. For, be it related, Doctor Strauss had invited, *but he did not play the host; the waiters collected from each guest!*"

How the war prevented Strauss from making a second visit to America is thus related by the well-known manager, M. H. Hanson:

"Miss Walker tried to get Strauss to sign a contract to come to the United States once more, to play her accompaniments at ten Strauss song recitals during the early spring of 1915, which were to be included in the 20 concerts I had arranged with her and Cleofonte Campanini, who had engaged her for Chicago.

"She offered him a never-before-heard-of fee. All to no avail! The Alpine Symphony had to be completed; and worse, Frau Direktor Strauss, anyhow, did not desire her husband to go across the ocean again. She could not spare him for three months, she declared. But Strauss was wavering; Edyth Walker's influence began to be felt. And then came the war!"

XIV

JOKES ON THE MUSICAL WORLD?

A sense of humor is one of the conspicuous traits of Richard Strauss. His friends and others have found him a sly, subtle joker.

In 1896 he wrote a song (published as Opus 31, Number 2) in the key of D flat, which ends, however, in D natural, contrary to all rules and regulations. At the bottom of the page is a note suggesting that any one singing this song before the end of the century might end it in the initial key. This attempt to be funny at the expense of those who abused him for his daring innovations was resented by his superior, Intendant Perfall of the Munich Opera, who took him to task for "frivolous conduct unbecoming a royal Kapellmeister!"

Of his sarcasm a good specimen is the remark he made to a man who tore Liszt's oratorio, *The Legend of St. Elizabeth*, into shreds:

"But you must surely admit, my dear Sir, that only a highly respectable man could have written that music!"

Mention has been made of three of Strauss's works as being autobiographic. A fourth might have been named; *Till Eulenspiegel*, which is made up of instrumental pranks reflecting the spirit of the practical jokes of a fictitious rogue whose doings are known to all Germans. Keen observers of Strauss think he is a good deal of a Till himself.

Some have indeed gone so far as to intimate that *Salome*, *Elektra*, and most of the tone poems are huge jokes on the musical world — attempts to see how much professional musicians and the public will tolerate in the way of orchestral dissonantal eccentricities, diverse exaggerations, and the suppression or maltreatment of the human voice. It has long been suspected, in particular, that his program music is insincere; and that he has often laughed in his sleeve at those who have taken it seriously.

PART III

PROGRAM MUSIC

AND

SYMPHONIC POEMS:

Do They Culminate in Strauss?

I

HAS STRAUSS SURPASSED LISZT?

In the realm of concert music, progress has been made since the day of Beethoven chiefly in two things: the cult of program music and the composing of symphonic poems in place of symphonies. In both these Liszt was the leader; but the opinion has been expressed (and parroted) that while he was the pioneer, Strauss was the perfector of the programmatic symphonic poem.

Is this true? The answer to this question is of great importance, for on it depends our estimate of Strauss's place in the history of music.

The most extravagant presentment of the view that program music and the symphonic poem culminate in Strauss is made by Ernest Newman in his life of that composer. Therein he declared that Strauss "has given a new life and meaning to the symphonic poem. He has put at once more brains, more music, and more technique into it than any of his predecessors or contemporaries. He has really added a new chapter to the history of musical form. . . . He has done for program music what Wagner did for opera — taken up the stray threads that earlier men had been fumbling with more or less ineffectively, added a great deal of new stuff of his own and woven it all into a fabric of undreamt of strength of texture and richness of color."

To this extravagant eulogy I venture to oppose the opinion that Strauss in his symphonic poems has no more excelled Liszt than he has in his operas surpassed Wagner.

Before proving this statement by comparing the orchestral works of these two men from every point of view, I shall try, for the sake of the general reader, to explain briefly what is meant by "program music" and by "symphonic poem", and give a bird's-eye view of what others did along these lines before Liszt.

II

A MUSICAL MISDEMEANOR

Probably the most amusing thing in the history of music is the fact that before Beethoven composed his Pastoral Symphony — in which there is an orchestral thunderstorm, with other sounds of nature such as the twittering of birds and the babbling of a brook — the writing of program music was looked on almost as a misdemeanor punishable by fine or imprisonment.

To this day, indeed, there are not a few who hold that music of this sort is necessarily inferior to what is called absolute music, or music which is not associated with sounds of nature or any kind of story or poetic conception. Among those who hold this view are some who seem to think that program music was originated by Berlioz and Liszt who, by their pernicious example, corrupted and demoralized the whole musical world.

Yet program music is as old as the art itself. Among primitive races all music is associated with the acts and thoughts of daily life — hunting, wooing, war, religion, death.

A fight with a dragon was one of the things the ancient Greek flute players attempted to suggest. Their instruments, to be sure, were not like our own flutes, or like the mellifluous flageolet with which the Omaha Indians did their courting, but more like a shrill clarinet.

In the Middle Ages, choruses were sung in which one was expected to hear the various sounds that would meet the ear in a frequented spot like St. Mark's Place in Venice. In others there were imitations of the clashing of swords, the bugle calls and other battle sounds, including the commands of the officers.

Modern program music is mostly instrumental, because the great variety of instrumental sounds and combinations makes it easier to imitate and suggest. Of instrumental battle and hunting pieces, countless samples have been composed. Beethoven was nearer the thousandth than the first who introduced the song of birds in his music. Before him Haydn had had the courage to enliven the scores of his oratorios with the roar of a lion, the croaking of frogs, the neighing of a horse, the sounds of thunder, rain, and wind. Long before him, in the sixteenth century, the cackling of hens, the barking of dogs, and the mewing of cats were imitated; so there is really nothing very startling or revolutionary in the baas of the sheep in Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*.

III

BEETHOVEN'S FOOLISH APOLOGY

Beethoven's apologetic remark that the program music in his *Pastoral Symphony* is "more the expression of feeling than painting" led Ernest Newman to re-

mark (in his "Musical Studies") that "the imitations of the nightingale, the cuckoo, and the quail may or may not be a Beethoven joke; but if they are not specimens of painting in music it is difficult to say what deserves that epithet. If the peasants' merry-making again, the brawl, the falling of the raindrops, the rushing of the wind, the storm, the flow of the brook — if these are not 'painting' but merely the 'expression of feeling', well, so is the hanging of Till Eulenspiegel, the death shudder of Don Juan, and the battle in *Ein Heldenleben*."

Encouraged by the example of Beethoven, whose music so delightfully contradicts his words, the composers who followed him succeeded gradually in securing more respect for program music. The irony of fate brought it about that the orchestral works of the conservative Mendelssohn that have best withstood the tooth of time are those in which his imagination was stirred by pictorial or poetic subjects — the overture to *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *Hebrides*, the *Scotch Symphony*, the *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. To Schumann, who was almost as much interested in poetry as in the tonal art, program music was inevitable. He differed, however, from others in adding the poetic titles to his finished pieces instead of starting with the literary or pictorial conception in his mind and allowing that to shape or color the music.

IV

AN AMERICAN INSTANCE

In America we have had Edward MacDowell, whose works include many choice specimens of the most

refined sort of program music. The *Woodland Sketches*, for instance, have imaginative titles: *To a Wild Rose, Will o' The Wisp, From Uncle Remus, From an Old Indian Lodge, A Deserted Farm, To a Water Lily, Told at Sunset*, which are admirably calculated to inspire the composer's creative fancy; and how well he succeeded in making his music mirror the poetic subjects!

Or take the *Sea Pieces*, of which Lawrence Gilman has well said in his "Nature in Music", that "they present a composite picture of the sea that is astonishing in its variety and breadth. Here is genuine sea-poetry — poetry to match with that of Whitman and the author of 'Thalasseus' and 'A Channel Passage.' The music is drenched with salt spray, wind-swept, exhilarating; there are passages in it through which rings the thunderous laughter of the sea in its moments of cosmic and terrifying elation, and there are pages through which drift sun-painted mists, or wherein the ineffable tenderness of the ocean under Summer Stars is conveyed with a beauty that is both magical and deep."

To return to Europe and an earlier date: program music received a fresh impetus through Berlioz, who, however, made the mistake of writing out an elaborate plot which, as Wagner noted, it is difficult to dovetail with the music while listening to a performance. There is much that is impressive, even thrilling in Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony*, and some of his other works, yet when all is said and done, the chief debt of gratitude we owe this brilliant Frenchman is that he inspired Liszt to make a specialty of program music and by his example and influence, give it universal vogue.

V

LISZT'S ARISTOCRATIC PROGRAM MUSIC

"Important as Berlioz is in the development of program music," writes Professor Niecks of the University of Edinburgh, in his elaborate and admirable history of this branch of music, "Liszt is far more so, indeed, he is the most important of all, and is this quite apart from the value of his productions as works of art."

What I wish to emphasize particularly about Liszt's program music is its refined, aristocratic character. Mere imitation of the sounds of nature or the cries of animals was too obvious and easy to appeal to him. True, in the *St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds*, the birds are heard; but their chirpings and twitterings are commingled and varied with a subtle art that raises this piano composition far above ordinary bird pieces. And how genuinely musical, in the noblest sense of the word, is its companion piece, *St. Francis Walking on the Waves*, with its surging billows of sound! No other composer for piano except Edward MacDowell has done anything to match it.

Crude realism was avoided by Liszt. He fully realized the limitations of music. "The merest tyro in landscape painting," he wrote in 1837, "can with one stroke of his pencil produce a scene more faithfully than a consummate musician with all the resources of the cleverest orchestra."

He did not wish his music to play second fiddle to painting or poetry; and, while he usually associated it with some pictorial or poetic idea, he tried to make

it a tonal and emotional commentary and intensifier rather than a mere echo or imitation.

The only one of Liszt's twelve symphonic poems that tries to tell a story in tones is *Mazeppa*, of which Professor Niecks justly says that it is "perhaps the most daring piece of tone painting in existence." It was inspired by Victor Hugo's poem of that name, in which the exciting story is told of a man who is tied by his enemies to the back of a wild horse which for three days speeds across forests, steppes, and frozen rivers, till it falls dead, while he is rescued from the birds and beasts of prey and becomes chief of a Ukraine tribe. Concerning Liszt's setting of this plot, Wagner wrote to him: "But how terribly beautiful your *Mazeppa* is: I was quite out of breath after reading it through the first time! I feel sorry, too, for the poor horse: How cruel are nature and the world!"

Liszt prefixed Hugo's long poem to the score as a guide; but there is also an earlier purely symbolical preface, which indicates that at first he intended this composition to illustrate the martyrdom and ultimate triumph of genius.

There is nothing cheap or sensational in the details of this piece of program music; nor is there in any of the other eleven symphonic poems or in the *Dante* or the *Faust* symphony — two great works, as Saint-Saëns has well said, which are symphonies in name only, being in reality symphonic poems in two and three parts. Next to this fact, I wish to emphasize the variety of ways in which Liszt embodies his ideas of program music.

VI

THE CHARM OF VARIETY

The *Battle of the Huns* was inspired by Kaulbach's mural painting in the New Museum in Berlin. For this symphonic poem Liszt supplied no programmatic indications, any more than he did for three of its companions; *Hungaria*, *Hamlet*, and *Festklänge*, which leave all details to the imagination of the hearer. But in a letter to his apostle, Walter Bache in London, he indicated what had been in his mind while composing the *Battle of the Huns*. "Kaulbach's world-famed painting shows two battles: One on the earth, the other in the air, in accordance with the legend that the warriors continued after death to fight as ghosts. In the midst of the picture appears the cross and its mysterious light; to that my symphonic poem is attached. The gradually emerging choral, 'crux fidelis', proclaims the final victory of Christianity."

What could be more potent than such a "program" to fertilize the creative power of a composer, or to evoke in the hearer the proper mood for thoroughly appreciating the music? Surely, program music offers to both composer and hearer a great advantage over absolute music, provided the program is simple and easily followed.

The first of Lizst's symphonic poems was, like the sixth (*Mazeppa*), inspired by a poem of Victor Hugo. Its title is *What One Hears on the Mountain*. In the score Liszt asks that the following indication of his intentions be printed on the programs of concerts at which this piece is to be played:

"The poet hears two voices; the one boundless,

glorifying, orderly, proclaiming to the Lord its jubilant song of praise; the other dull, filled with expressions of pain, weeping, culmination and curses. The first of these voices represents Nature; the second Mankind. The two voices struggle to get nearer and nearer together, they cross and amalgamate, till finally they dissolve in solemn contemplation and die away."

In this work, says Saint-Saëns, Liszt has succeeded marvelously in reflecting the spirit of Victor Hugo's poem. He is, indeed, inclined to consider it "the most admirable of these famous symphonic poems." Weingartner and most Lisztites give first place to *Tasso*, which also is, next to *Les Préludes*, the most popular of them. *Lament and Triumph* is the subtitle of *Tasso*. Prefixed to the score is a programmatic explanation in course of which Liszt says: "Tasso loved and suffered in Ferrara; he has been avenged in Rome; his glory still lives in the folk songs of Venice. These three moments are inseparably connected with his immortal memory. In order to express them in music we have first evoked the shade of the hero, such as it appears to us nowadays, haunting the lagunas of Venice; we have then glanced at his proud and saddened face as he wandered amidst the festive scenes of Ferrara, where he had given birth to his masterpiece; finally, we have followed him to Rome, the Eternal City, which, in handing him her crown, glorified in him the martyr and the poet." [1]

[1] For details regarding all the symphonic poems see Huneker's book on Liszt, pp. 103–158; Hervey's, pp. 79–120; Kapp's (German), pp. 403–408, etc.; Müller-Reuter's "Lexicon"; and Niecks's book on "Program Music" pp. 265–316.

These examples indicate the variety as well as the exalted character of Liszt's program music. No trace is there of crude materialism. What he aimed at was atmosphere, poetic suggestion, evocation of moods. What Beethoven claimed for his *Pastoral Symphony* ("more the expression of feeling than painting") is literally true of the bulk of Liszt's symphonic poems.

"Psycho-Dramas" the eminent German historian, Karl Storck, has happily called them. Felix Draeseke, the composer, praises them because of their avoidance of grotesque subjects — whereas in Strauss, as Ernest Newman himself points out, there grew up gradually "a deep love of the grotesque for its own sake (and music happens to be the art in which the grotesque most jars upon us and most quickly wearies us)." Weingartner, the great conductor, who devotes some eloquent pages to Liszt in his book "The Symphony since Beethoven", points at his symphonic poems as models for all time, showing where music must stop in its attempts to vie with poetry or painting; and Saint-Saëns agrees with Richard Strauss that they are the *most important works for the concert hall composed since Beethoven.*

The high-toned, lucid, truly refined, and aristocratic character of Liszt's symphonic poems is so vividly attested in the brief analysis of his *Mazeppa* made by Saint-Saëns that I cannot resist the temptation to cite it. *Mazeppa*, he declares, is a masterwork. "In all music there is not another such riot of sound, which carries along violins, violas and violoncellos, as a raging mountain torrent sweeps away bushes by their roots." He then calls attention to the fact that even in this his most pronounced piece of descriptive music, Liszt avoids crude materialism (such as Strauss often indulges in).

"The physical imitation of the horse's gallop is," he continues, "entirely secondary, and by no means realistic, as the enemies of descriptive music might fear; the title indicates the subject, and that suffices to guide the thoughts in the right direction. In the midst of the orchestral furious gallop there come into prominence melodic phrases which tell their meaning with marvelous distinctness. The horse annihilates space, yet all the interest centers on the man who suffers and thinks. Toward the middle of the composition one gets the impression as of an immensity without limits; horse and rider flee into the boundless steppe, and the man's vision confusedly feels, rather than sees, the thousand details of space. There is here a marvelous orchestral effect. The string instruments, divided into many groups, sound from the greatest heights to the lowest depths of their scale a mass of little sounds of all kinds, tied, detached, nipped, even with the wood of the bow, and from all this results a sort of harmonic crackling of extreme tenuity, a background of veiled sound from which arises a plaintive and touching phrase. And it all ends with a Circassian March, irresistible in effect, on which Mazeppa rises as King."

VII

STRAUSS'S SYMPHONIC PUZZLES

Saint-Saëns's own symphonic poems share the lucidity and refinement of Liszt's; it is easy to follow the poetic subject while hearing the music.

Nothing could be more admirably suited for musical illustration than the poem on which his *Danse Macabre*

(Dance of Death) is based; a poem by Henri Cazalis in which Death is pictured as a fiddler who summons the skeletons from their graves, as the harp strikes the midnight hour, for a dance which lasts till the cock crows, the rhythm being accentuated by the clack of bones. Never for a moment does the hearer lose his clue. Nor does he in the same composer's *Phaeton*, based on the story of the ambitious young man who tries to drive the sun chariot across the sky but gets too near the earth, which is saved from destruction by a thunderbolt hurled by Jupiter. That's the real stuff for musical treatment! And if the stuff was lacking, Saint-Saëns was silent. When I asked him why he had composed no more symphonic poems he replied: "Because I had no more ideas."

Now comes the important question: How does Richard Strauss's method compare with that of Liszt and his pupil Saint-Saëns? Does he really improve on Liszt, as Ernest Newman maintains, and in what way?

He does *not* improve on him. Quite the contrary. He goes back to Berlioz, and even farther, to the old-fashioned kind of program music of which Kuhnau's *David and Goliath* was a famous specimen more than two hundred years ago.[1]

It must be admitted that Strauss started out with the best of intentions to do the right thing and prove himself a worthy disciple of Liszt. In the section of this book devoted to his nine tone poems, full details will be given on this point. Here a few of the principal facts will suffice to prove my assertion.

When this programmatic symphony, *From Italy*, was played, he was indignant because one of the critics

[1] See Niecks's "Program Music" p. 24.

referred to it as "a musical Baedeker of Southern Italy"; a criticism which indicated, as Strauss put it, " a frightful lack of understanding and judgment." To be sure, the movements were entitled *In the Campagna, Amid the Ruins of Rome, On the Beach of Sorrento,* and *Neapolitan Folk Life.* But, as the composer wrote to a friendly journalist, Karl Wolff, he did not intend to describe the splendid sights of Southern Italy but his feelings on beholding them. "It is really absurd," he continues, "in the case of a modern composer like myself, who has learned from the classical masters, including the mature Beethoven, as well as from Wagner and Liszt, to suppose him capable of composing a work lasting three quarters of an hour with the deliberate intention of exhibiting a few piquant specimens of tone painting such as at present are at the command of almost any advanced conservatory student."

In this indignant diatribe against the critics, Strauss really condemns in the most amusing fashion his own subsequent method of writing program music.

As we follow the story of his life we note his extraordinary struggle against his friends, his publishers, and the orchestral conductors, who fairly compelled him to spoil his tone poems by supplying detailed programs which at first he had withheld.

His first symphonic poem, *Macbeth,* attracted so little attention that he was not called upon to add to the simple cues he had supplied — the words "Macbeth" and "Lady Macbeth", and a brief citation from Shakespeare. *Don Juan* was published without the lines from Lenau's poem now printed (with his sanction) in concert programs. They were not used at the first performance of this work. As for Ritter's poem which

now accompanies *Death and Transfiguration*, it did not inspire or shape the music, but was written after the score was completed.

When Wüllner in Cologne was preparing the first performance of *Till Eulenspiegel*, he wrote for a program to Strauss, who had not supplied one, and who said in reply. "It is not possible for me to give you a program for *Eulenspiegel*. What I had in mind when I composed the different parts would, if clothed in words, often seem queer enough, and might even give offence. Let us, therefore, this time leave it to the hearers to crack the nut offered by the rogue. . . . The merry Cologne folk may guess as to the musical pranks played on them by a 'rogue.'" Subsequently, however, he sanctioned (and obviously inspired) the copious details and elucidations given in Mauke's *Musikführer* Number 103.

A Hero's Life also was not provided at first with a detailed program, while *Zarathustra* had only nine explanatory headlines besides a prose preface in fourteen brief sentences. But in all these cases Strauss subsequently — as we shall see in detail later on — helped to provide detailed analyses which, in the words of Ernest Newman, "burden music with extraneous and inassimilable literary concepts." Already in *Don Juan* he starts on "the false path that has led him into so many marshes and quicksands"; until gradually "people were puzzled to the point of insanity", Newman continues, "by *Zarathustra* and its 'Uebermenschen' and its 'Genesende' and all the rest of that queer fauna."

"*Puzzled to the point of insanity!*" So this is the much vaunted "progress" in Strauss's program music over that of Liszt, proclaimed by this same English critic!

Was I justified in heading this chapter "Strauss's Symphonic Puzzles?"

An amusing summary of Strauss's habitual proceeding in gradually doling out information about his programs is given by Mr. Newman in an article printed in the London *Speaker*: "With each new work of Strauss there is the same tomfoolery — one can use no milder word to describe the proceedings that no doubt have a rude kind of German humor, but that strike other people as more than a trifle silly."

Ergo the culmination of program-music making lies in silliness, Teutonic humor and tomfoolery!

To how much better advantage Strauss's tone poems would now appear if he had lived up to the point of view indicated by some remarks addressed to the critic Paul Riesenfeld, whom he begged to remember that he was "through and through a musician and always only a musician, to whom all programs are merely incitements to new forms and nothing more."

It might be said that Strauss has gone beyond Liszt in his ingenious use of unmusical sounds to imitate, for instance, the baaing of scared sheep in *Don Quixote*. But Liszt would have refused to follow his follower in that "new departure", because — well, because he would have considered it too medieval, too obvious, too crude. As Strauss himself said, in a passage already quoted, "almost any advanced conservatory student" can do that sort of thing, which is about on a level with the steamboat races and similar things "pictured" in tones by band masters.

Max Steinitzer calls attention to the fact that it is only in a detail here and there that Strauss's music depends for its comprehension on the program; and he recommends hearing the tone poems first as absolute

music before studying their poetic substratum. This is sound advice; but does it not practically remove the works from the realm of program music altogether?

As absolute music some of them are as interesting as Brahms's symphonies.

VIII

THE EMANCIPATOR OF ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

Gilbert and Sullivan obviously never perpetrated anything more topsy-turvy than the statement that Strauss with his tone poems that "puzzle the hearer to the point of insanity", "has done for program music what Wagner did for opera."

Particularly untenable is the claim that Strauss has "really added a new chapter to the history of musical *form*." The man who did add a new chapter to the history of orchestral form was Franz Liszt. He was the creator of the symphonic poem, and, as Saint-Saëns has enthusiastically written,[1] "this brilliant and fertile creative act will be with future generations his chief claim to honor. When time shall have effaced the bright record of the greatest pianist that ever lived, it will write his name in its golden book as that of the emancipator of music."

Why the "Emancipator"? Because he freed composers from the slavery of a few rigid and artificial forms. "Not long ago," Saint-Saëns remarks, "orchestral music had only two forms at its disposal: the symphony and the overture. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven did not write anything else; who

[1] See his splendidly eloquent chapter on Liszt in his "Harmonie et Mélodie."

would have dared to do things different from theirs? Weber did not dare, nor did Mendelssohn, nor Schubert, nor Schumann."

Why did it take a man of rare courage to create the symphonic poem? Because it involved the dethronement of King Symphony.

Up to that time all the composers had bowed their heads and bent their knees before that monarch. The symphony was regarded — and still is regarded by some conservative persons — as the perfection of organic form.

In truth the symphony, as a *cyclic* composition — that is as a work in four movements — has with very few exceptions no organic form — that is, no coherence, at all. The exceptions are Beethoven's ninth, in which the themes of the first three movements are recapitulated in the fourth, and a few works by Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and other modern masters, in which some degree of coherence is established by the recurrence in one movement of themes from a preceding one.

If a painter inclosed four small pictures, totally unrelated in subject, within one frame and called the *ensemble* an organic, coherent work, would not everybody smile? And would not everybody laugh at an author who claimed superior honors for four of his short stories, totally unrelated, simply because he chose to publish them between the same covers and called the book Opus 17 or 24?

Yet this superior respect is claimed for sets of four unrelated short pieces when they are grouped together and issued, as, for example, Symphony Number 7, in D major, Opus 14. Could anything be more childish?

There is absolutely no organic structural connection between the four movements of any one of Haydn's

one hundred and four symphonies or Mozart's forty, or, in short, of ninety-nine of every hundred symphonies in existence; yet music lovers to this day are expected to fall down and worship the antique stuffed fetish called the Cyclic Symphony!

I do not, of course, speak here of the *music* of these symphonies, which is often beautiful and sometimes sublime. What I assail is the *form*, which is really no form at all, but simply an academic formula, about as simple and brainy as a cook's mold for gingerbread.

Liszt refused to worship this stuffed symphonic fetish, this cyclic absurdity, this everlasting formula of incoherent allegros, adagios, scherzos, allegros.

What a lack of imagination this formula showed — this monotonous repetition of allegro, adagio, minuet (or scherzo), allegro! How infinitely more poetic is the symphonic poem with its titles: *Tasso, Mazeppa, Battle of the Huns!*

Because of Liszt's refusal to worship the stuffed fetish, he was (and still is) violently abused, just as was his friend and son-in-law, Wagner, for smashing the sequence of incoherent airs called an opera and building up, in place of it, the music drama, which is coherent in all its parts!

The methods by which these two men achieved coherence were similar. Wagner and Liszt worked at the problem at the same time and independently of each other, both being influenced by Weber, who, in his operas, first hinted (long before Berlioz, who also learned from him) at the splendid possibilities for establishing coherence which is offered by leading motives, or recurring themes.[1]

[1] For details on this point I must refer the reader to the chapter on Leading Motives in Volume II of my "Wagner and his Works."

How infinitely superior this new method is to the old-fashioned operatic mosaic is illustrated even in the case of so early a work as *The Flying Dutchman*, the basis of which is the dramatic ballad which relates the story of the cursed seafarer and the phantom ship. By the use of his new method, as Saint-Saëns has graphically remarked,[1] Wagner "performed almost a miracle when he succeeded during the whole of the first act of *The Flying Dutchman* in making us hear the sound of the sea without interrupting the dramatic action."

In his later music dramas, Wagner steadily perfected his method. Think of the love motive which pervades *Tristan and Isolde* in a thousand metamorphoses; or the heroic, martial *Parsifal* motive, which assumes a mysterious transformation to a minor key, when he appears disguised in his helmet before Gurnemanz, in the third act.

IX

WHAT IS A SYMPHONIC POEM?

A similar way of transforming themes is used by Liszt in his symphonic poems, which, like Wagner's music dramas, are coherent in all their parts, thanks to the use of recurring themes. No better description of his method could be given than that of Saint-Saëns, whose symphonic poems are, next to Liszt's, the best ever written, and whose literary works are as interesting and valuable as the best of his compositions. As a writer on musical topics, Saint-Saëns is, indeed, even more fascinating and suggestive than the only two other Frenchmen who compete with him, Berlioz

[1] *Century Magazine*, February, 1893.

and Romain Rolland. Each of his three books: "Harmonie et Mélodie", "Portraits et Souvenirs", and "L'Ecole Buissonnière", contains a splendid chapter on Liszt. Everybody interested in music should read these volumes. "The symphonic poem, as shaped by Liszt, is," he says, "usually a group of different movements depending on one another and derived from a primary idea, which interlace and form one piece. The pattern of a musical poem of this sort is capable of endless variation. To secure the greatest possible variety, Liszt most frequently chose a musical phrase which he transformed by artful manipulation of the rhythm in such a way as to make it assume the most varied aspects and express the most diverse feelings. It is one of Wagner's most habitual procedures, and is, I believe, the only thing these two composers have in common."

There is no break between the different movements which make up a symphonic poem *à la* Liszt. The music flows on continuously and coherently, just like a short story by a great writer, with a plot and description of characters.

The most important thing about a true symphonic poem is that the form of the music is shaped by the poem, as the brief descriptions of several of Liszt's works given in preceding pages show. This gives opportunities for endless variety of structure, whereas a composer of symphonies follows the everlasting, stereotyped, unpoetic formula of *allegro, adagio, scherzo, allegro.*

Richard Wagner congratulated Liszt on the invention of this new form in music and on the choice of the two words, "symphonic poem", to indicate it.

He frankly admitted that he had made a mistake in declaring that instrumental music had reached its

full development in Beethoven, with nothing to be expected beyond. Liszt's symphonic poems proved to him that not only was further development beyond Beethoven possible, but development of extreme importance.

The symphony, he recalls, was developed from simple dance and march rhythms, whereas the symphonic poem has a *poetic* basis; its form is conditioned by the evolution of a poetic idea and not by an alternation of slow or lively dance rhythms. "Now," he asks, "are the march or the dance, with all their associations, a more worthy source of form than, for example, the principal and most characteristic features in the actions and sufferings of an Orpheus, a Prometheus, etc.?"

Liszt, in a word, *enabled composers to enjoy the same freedom in shaping their thoughts that the writers of books have always enjoyed.* 3

For this epoch-making achievement he was attacked and slandered by musical critics with amazing violence and persistence.

X

"AMOOSIN' BUT ONPRINCIPLED"

Whenever a musical critic discourses about form he is apt to remind one of Artemus Ward's kangaroo, which that showman described as an "amoosin' but onprincipled cuss."

In the two volumes of my "Wagner and His Works", I devoted several pages after the description of each opera to short extracts from abusive criticisms. At the time they were written, these criticisms were serious matters. To-day everybody laughs at them, as at the capers of an Australian marsupial.

These critics could not see that Wagner's music dramas differ from operas in really being organically coherent. One of them compared them to jellyfish. "Tone molluscs" another called them, while a third boldly proclaimed that the music of these operas "is entirely devoid of continuity of musical form." Similar criticisms were flung at Liszt and his pupil, Strauss. Newman devotes several pages of his book on this composer to refuting "the wild charge of formlessness."

Nor were these by any means the only composers against whom the marsupial critics brought this "wild charge of formlessness." To mention only two in place of two dozen: concerning Chopin, a prominent English scholar wrote that he had "no form at all but only style"; and as for Schumann, his symphonies were declared to be "made up of cobbler's patches."

XI

FLAWS IN BEETHOVEN AND BRAHMS

It would not be fair, even if it were permissible, to cite here Mr. Newman's amusing defence of Strauss against the charge of formlessness; every reader of this book should peruse it in his volume. But I cannot resist the temptation to quote a few lines from two admirably lucid articles by the same forcible writer which appeared in the London *Musical Times* of November and December, 1911.

The Lisztian way — followed also by Strauss and many others — is, he says, as much more difficult than the old symphonic way as "driving a team of horses is harder than driving one; you have both to evolve

new material out of the old and to advance your story or extend your picture at the same pace." . . .

Critics of Liszt's form would do well to remember that perfect form is extremely rare even in the great classical writers. All really good form has the air of an improvisation, like a flower or a crystal; the moment you can detect the joints in a piece of music, or see the reflective, deliberative processes by which a given section of it has been built up, all illusion as to its being an organic growth necessarily vanishes. The opponents of Liszt and of the school of program writers that has developed from him have thitherto had too unquestioned a say on these matters. No impartial student of Liszt will deny that he is often in serious difficulties with his building. But if some one, instead of accepting blindly all that is said about "classical form" and its practitioners, were to play the devil's advocate and subject it and them to a searching and unsympathetic examination, what havoc he could play with them! . . . A quite unprejudiced eye can detect numberless instances of mechanical jointing in Beethoven, due to his working, at a certain stage of a sonata or symphony, on a plan settled by tradition, instead of letting his imagination run without constraint. . . .

So with Brahms, the "faultless master of form." Take the first movement of the second symphony, and look at the passage commencing with the horns in the fifth measure after the double bar, and extending for some forty measures, to the *fortissimo* in the full orchestra. What is this but a mere text book exercise in the variation of a given thematic fragment, a thing as easy to do as twisting a Panama hat into one shape after another? Like Beethoven in the case I have cited, Brahms is here a mere mechanician; he is simply treading water until he can find courage to plunge and swim again, simply "talking through his hat", as the proletariat would put it, to keep our attention occupied until he can think of something really vital to say.[1]

[1] Compare with this Mr. Newman's delightfully humorous remarks in his Strauss book (pp. 56–60) explaining why he wishes somebody would write "an exhaustive book on *Sonata Form, Its Cause, and Cure*, and present a copy to every student who is in danger of catching the disease."

It could never be said of Liszt, as has justly been said of Brahms by this same English judge, that "he is less a master of form than 'form' is master of him." In the words of Doctor Hugo Riemann, "a victorious musical logic penetrates even those of Liszt's works which most conspicuously ignore the old laws of form"; and "he never loses his thread as Berlioz does so often."

Read also what Hans von Bülow says (in his "Ausgewählte Schriften", p. 140) concerning Richard Strauss's idol and model. "Liszt's school is not a school in the old sense of the word. His school not only desires but teaches the artistic emancipation of individual content from conventional forms. In it are life and variety in place of the stagnation and monotony to be found elsewhere. In Liszt's new forms — *the smallest of which as well as the largest show the most faultless logic, the most admirable architectural economy* — we find, whatever doubters may say, *laws;* but they are laws of the spirit, not of the letter; laws unchangeable in their nature, but varying in their application. *Liszt gives models for free, not for slavish imitation.*"

Even in the *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, which sound like free improvisations, Liszt is revealed as a master of form. As August Spanuth has written: "Like the bard who moves his listeners first to tears through the recital of a sombre legend and turns to a joyful story after having touched the heart but binds both elements together with a latent string, so Liszt's rhapsodies are groups of fragments of heterogeneous modes, united through hundreds of secret relations. There is a symmetry of content and form in all of them, which becomes more apparent as soon as a virtuoso ventures to distort it by omitting a section or interpolating a portion of one rhapsody into the other."

XII

A WORLD VICTORY

If Strauss has gone beyond Liszt in his mastery of form, I have not been able to find the evidences thereof either in his works or the pleadings of his apostles. We saw in the biographic pages how, after mastering all the classical forms, including Brahms's treatment of them, and after himself writing some orthodox symphonies, Strauss turned his back on this phase of music and thenceforth followed the Lisztian maxim that the poetic contents of a composition should shape its form. None of his works differ from Liszt's more widely in form than Liszt's differ from one another; and he most certainly has not added "a new chapter to the history of musical form."

His tone poems differ from Liszt's chiefly by their polyphonic complexity; but polyphonic complexity is not a new thing in music but a thing medieval. Not only Bach, but many of the old Netherlanders surpassed even Strauss in contrapuntal ingenuity. Of this more anon.

Strauss is simply one of the three chief disciples of Liszt, the other two being Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky. Of these three, Saint-Saëns is the earliest as well as the most cleverly and vividly realistic; Tchaikovsky the most melodious and impassioned, and Strauss the most elaborate, complicated, and dissonantal.

Besides these three giants, there was a multitude of composers, big and little, who hastened to benefit by Liszt's discovery of a new and better way of shaping orchestral works. Symphonies continued to be written, but the bulk of orchestral works was made up of

symphonic poems along the free and varied line indicated by Liszt.

The Russians flocked to the new standard *en masse* — not only the radicals but the reformers. Besides Tchaikovsky, we find Rimsky-Korsakoff, Scriabin, Glazunoff, even Rubinstein, and many others. In France Saint-Saëns led the procession, followed by Bruneau, Dukas, D'Indy, and the Belgian César Franck. In Bohemia Smetana devoted himself chiefly to works in the Lisztian form, to which his countryman, Dvořák, also turned after writing five symphonies. In Germany, Brahms was the only prominent master who refused to put his orchestral wine in the new bottles; nor do we find a different state of affairs in other countries, including England and America. In a word, Liszt conquered the world; and, let me repeat most emphatically, it is a monstrous injustice to him to give the credit for this monumental achievement to Richard Strauss, who is merely one of his followers, and who would be the last in the world to filch the honor from his idol.

XIII

STRAUSS'S MARVELOUS MIND

There are two things in which Strauss, in his tone poems, has gone beyond Liszt: in the polyphonic interweaving of themes and in the laying on of orchestral colors. The question now to be considered is whether in going beyond Liszt he has improved on him.

It is harder to drive a stagecoach with six horses than one with only two, but it is more fun for the driver. Strauss evidently greatly enjoys writing complicated orchestral scores, both for the concert hall

and the opera house. To keep up the simile, some of his works remind one of the advertisements of the Twenty-Mule-Team Borax Company. Liszt, except in his choral works, seldom indulged in polyphony. One melody at a time was enough for him. In his works the horses are driven tandem style. The very important question to be asked is: "Are those driving with Strauss in his coach and six likely to have a better time than those who are content with Liszt's equipage — *and his company?*"

When reproached with the complexity of his scores, Strauss replied, "The devil! I cannot express it more simply, although I try to be as simple as possible; striving for originality is a thing a true artist does not indulge in;" and he proceeded to explain that if his rhythms and other procedures seemed too subtle and complex, it was due to the fact that what to others might seem quite modern, of the twentieth century, was to him so familiar and ordinary that he did not care to chew the cud once more.

Writing any kind of an orchestral score is perhaps the most intricate thing the human brain can accomplish. A painter with his brush covers one thing at a time. A novelist dwells on one character at a time; but a composer has to do "stunts" as astounding as those of Lasker, who could play twenty games of chess at the same time, *blindfolded*, with some one telling him the moves. He had to keep in mind twenty chess boards, with the consecutive changes on all of them!

This seems uncanny, if not incredible; yet what did Strauss do when he composed, say, *Thus Spake Zarathustra?* He had to write for three flutes, three oboes, English horn, three clarinets, bass clarinet,

three bassoons, double bassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two bass tubas, four kettledrums, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, a bell, two harps, organ, and sixty-four strings (sixteen first and sixteen second violins, twelve violas, twelve violin-cellos, eight double-basses) — one hundred and five players altogether. To be sure, the sixteen first violins or the other groups of strings sometimes play only one part, but often they are divided into a number of parts, so that the complexity of the score is enormously increased; and in using the full orchestra the composer is like a coachman driving a hundred horses and seeing to it that each one does his share of the work — with this difference, that the musician's achievement requires a hundred times more brains than the coachman's.

From this point of view, Richard Strauss's mind is one of the wonders of the musical world, his achievements in orchestral polyphony being equaled perhaps only by those of Richard Wagner, in the final acts of *Tristan*, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Parsifal*.

Polyphony implies not only the simultaneous sounding of many instruments (or voices), but also the interweaving of them so as to form a continuous tonal web with a definite pattern. Of this interweaving of parts Strauss is a consummate master, rivaling Bach, who would have nodded approvingly at such feats of contrapuntal virtuosity as the fugue in *Zarathustra* or the double fugue in the *Sinfonia Domestica*.

Thus, in Strauss's superlative contrapuntal skill, we have at last found a point in which he has excelled Liszt. But to conclude from this, as some have done, that his works are in a higher artistic level than Liszt's is foolish.

Polyphony is an attribute of German art in particular — of Bach, Handel, Wagner, Strauss, Reger. Yet

in Beethoven's symphonies, or in those of Schubert, the polyphonic interweaving of melodies is much less in evidence; nor are Chopin, Verdi, Bizet, Grieg, Tchaikovsky — to name the greatest geniuses of five musical countries — more addicted to polyphonic practices than the leading Hungarian composer, Liszt, who thus finds himself in very good company.

We now laugh at those who belittle him because he was not a contrapuntal juggler, as we laugh at Schubert's friends, who, shortly before his death — after the creation of works which made him one of the three or four greatest of all masters — persuaded him to take lessons in counterpoint of the desiccated old Sechter!

While admiring Strauss for his contrapuntal skill, which places him on a level with Bach and Wagner, we must not overlook the fact that this same skill has been his most dangerous foe. It has often tempted him to exaggeration — to writing pages so extremely complicated in the interweaving of the multitudinous parts that no ear, however well trained, can follow them. The Germans themselves have called this sort of thing *Augenmusik* — music for the eyes. An expert score-reader finds such an ultrapolyphonic page very interesting, because of the mathematical ingenuity it exhibits; but when he has his orchestra play it, he finds that the composer has been wasting his juggler's skill on the desert air.

A vivid illustration of Strauss's method of damaging his own music by indulging his propensity to do polyphonic "stunts" is given by Ernest Newman in his "Musical Studies." In the dance in *Zarathustra* "his excessive subdivision of the strings merely results in the waltz-theme coming out far too feebly. His own specification at the beginning of the score

is for sixteen first violins (to consider this section alone). In the waltz he divides them into (1) first desk, (2) second, third, fourth, and fifth desks. Then he divides the first desk again, giving part of them an arpeggio figure, and the remainder a theme in two parts, involving a further subdivision of this small remainder. The result is that the melody is shorn of all its power. There is no earthly need for such a page as this. The whole strength of the strings is frittered away upon things that do not come out, and would be quite unimportant if they did come out; and the really important theme is shorn of all its impressiveness."

This is a good example of what the Germans call "eye-music." It is very prone to degenerate into a sport, and already Strauss has been beaten at his own game. In a pamphlet on Arnold Schönberg's Quartet in D minor, published by G. Schirmer, Kurt Schindler tells us that Strauss was quite interested from the beginning in this innovator; and he relates this characteristic anecdote: While at a private party, Strauss was being complimented on the extraordinary skill and complications of his scores, when he exclaimed, with a singular mixture of sarcasm and naïve admiration: "Children, that is nothing at all! There is a young man of Vienna who leaves us all behind; he needs sixty-five staves for his scores, for which he has his music-paper specially printed, and I told him that I myself could not make head or tail of them." Which reminds one of the metaphysician Hegel, a word juggler rivaling these tone jugglers, who is said to have complained on his deathbed that only one man had understood him. "And even he," he added lugubriously, after a pause, "didn't understand me."

What this kind of emulation may lead to is suggested by a satirical article by Frederick Corder printed in the London *Musical Times*. About a century ago there lived in Naples a composer named Raimondi.

This remarkable man, after writing a dozen fugues which could be played any three at the same time, four other fugues in four other keys which could be played together (*pace* Richard Strauss!) and an overture which could be played in canon a bar later by a second orchestra (I have seen those works with these eyes) — wrote for the carnival a serious opera and a comic one, so arranged as to be performed simultaneously, at stages on opposite sides of the public square. The overtures went together, but after this there would be a chorus in one opera while a song or duet was taking place in the other, so that they seemed quite independent. Fired by the success of this effort, he wrote three oratorios entitled *Potiphar*, *Pharaoh*, and *Jacob* which, after being performed separately, were played all at once to a fourth libretto called *Joseph*. It is said that the excitement caused by this performance was so great as to cause the death of the aged composer. All this sounds like a fairy tale, but I assure you it is an unvarnished fact.

Mr. Corder further says: "I have tried the experiment of setting two pianolas to play Strauss's *Zarathustra* and *Death and Transformation* at the same time, with the curious result that I could have sworn I was listening to *Elektra!*"

XIV

ORCHESTRAL TONE COLORS

The tendency to overexercise his marvelous technical skill also prevents Strauss at times from appearing to best advantage as an orchestral colorist. Often, in listening to his works, one feels like saying "Less would be more." Having an orchestra of a hundred or more

players he seems to think he must keep all of them busy all the time; reminding one of the theatrical manager who, noticing at a rehearsal that the trombone players were silent several minutes, asked them sharply what they thought he was paying them for.

Keeping in mind the subject of this part of our book: "Program Music and Symphonic Poems: Do They Culminate in Richard Strauss?" we must now ask whether, as an orchestral colorist, he has surpassed Liszt. The answer to this is Yes; but a qualified Yes. Liszt never made the mistake of overorchestrating in which Strauss so often indulges. He shows the same exquisite taste in combining and laying on the instrumental colors, and the same instinct for idiomatic effects that he does in his piano pieces. And while Strauss has gone beyond his idol in some ways, to be dwelt on presently, he did not do so to a greater extent than Liszt went beyond all of his predecessors or contemporaries, excepting Berlioz and Wagner. His colorings, while rivaling those of these two specialists, are quite different.

To Saint-Saëns, himself a past master in the art of orchestral coloring, this fact was patent at the time these three men were still busy. In his "Portraits et Souvenirs" he pays this eloquent tribute to Liszt as an orchestrator, indicating how original his tonal effects were even to one who, like this great Frenchman, knew all musical literature by heart:

> The orchestral soberness of the classical symphony Liszt replaces by all the richness of the modern orchestra; and just as he had, with marvellous ingenuity, introduced this wealth in his music for the piano, so now he transfers to the orchestra his virtuosity, creating a new art of instrumentation of unheard-of splendor, being aided by the unexplored resources which the improvement in instruments and the

increasing skill of the players placed at his disposal. The procedure of Richard Wagner is often cruel; he takes no account of the fatigue resulting from superhuman efforts; he often demands the impossible — the players do what they can do —; Liszt's methods, on the other hand, do not call for such censure. He asks of orchestral players what they can do and no more.

Strauss himself pays a similar tribute to Liszt in the introduction to his splendid edition of Berlioz's treatise on Orchestration. After explaining that the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart are little more than string quartets with obligato wood-wind instruments and noise-makers (horns, trumpets, kettle drums) for the *tutti* parts, he goes on to say that "the fact that Beethoven, in his fifth and ninth symphonies, makes freer use of the brass instruments cannot hide from us the truth that the symphonic works of this master, also, do not deny the chamber-music style. More than in the cases of Haydn and Mozart do we find in Beethoven's works the spirit of the pianoforte with its characteristic turns — this same spirit of the piano which so exclusively rules the subsequent works of Schumann and Brahms, unfortunately not always to their advantage or the hearer's gratification. It was reserved for Franz Liszt's color-instinct (*Klangsinn*) to transform this spirit of the piano into its equivalent in the orchestra, *which he awakened to new poetic life.*"

XV

STRAUSS BLOWS HIS OWN HORN

Innumerable writers have sung — and justly sung — the praises of Strauss as a conjurer of dazzling orchestral colors, wherefore one cannot apply to him

Charles Black's witty adage: "Whoso bloweth not his own horn, the same shall not be blown." In this same introduction to Berlioz's treatise, however, there is such a subtle attempt to exalt himself above not only Liszt, but Berlioz and Weber, that it is of particular interest to subject his claim to a close scrutiny.

To be sure he says of Berlioz, this bold innovator, this ingenious color-mixer, this real creator of the modern orchestra, totally lacked the gift of polyphony. He may or may not have known the many-voiced mysteries of the miraculous scores of Joh. Seb. Bach; — one thing is certain: his purely musical and somewhat primitively melodic mind did not comprehend this highest efflorescence of musical genius, such as we find in Bach's cantatas, in Beethoven's last quartets, in the poetic mechanism of the third act of *Tristan*, as the supreme emanation of unrestrained melodic wealth. And it is only by way of true polyphony that the supreme miracles of orchestral sounds are achieved. An orchestral score in which there are middle and lower voices which are awkwardly, or let us say, carelessly, conducted, will seldom be found free from a certain hardness and will never yield the richness of color which suffuses a score in the elaboration of which the composer has also assigned soulful, beautifully curved melodic lines to the second violins, second violas, violoncellos, basses, and other instruments. Here lies the secret of the unprecedented *Klangpoesie* of the *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* scores, as well as of that of the *Siegfried Idyl*, written for a small orchestra; whereas, on the other hand, such works as the orchestral dramas of Berlioz, which are constructed with a keen instinct for coloring, and the scores of Weber and Liszt — each of whom was in his own way a great instrumental poet and master of coloring — betray by a certain unyielding hardness (*Sprödigkeit*) in the tints that the composer did not consider the choir of accompanying or supplemental parts worthy of melodic independence, for which reason the conductor, on his part, cannot call on them to contribute their share of soulfulness which is necessary for warming up the whole body orchestral.

This sounds plausible, and yet it is quite misleading. If the beauty and the soulfulness of orchestral writing and playing depend on the polyphic elaboration of the score, why is it that Brahms, who is a past master of polyphony, is notorious for the drab hues of his scores. Why again is the instrumental coloring usually so void of charm in the scores of Max Reger, the cleverest polyphonist since Bach? And why did England's most scholarly historian, Sir Herbert Parry, call special attention to the fact that orchestration is "the very department of art in which Bach was most deficient." If Strauss's reasoning were correct, it would be just the other way with these three superlative masters of polyphony.

Handel sneered at Gluck, who, he said, knew no more about counterpoint than his cook; yet while all the operas of Handel, the polyphonist, are forgotten, several of Gluck's survive to this day; and there are in them many pages of lovely orchestral water colors.

The greatest master of coloring is he who has the ability to paint rich canvases with a few instruments, regardless of all interweaving of parts. Grieg was not a polyphonist, yet in all music there is no score richer and more soulful than his *The Last Spring*, in which the colors fairly shimmer and thrill by their glowing intensity.

Schubert, whom his friends found so unpolyphonic that they advised him, shortly before his death, to take lessons in counterpoint, fairly reveled in orchestral colors, and in his last two symphonies there are many luscious pages — like new sounds from another planet — which excel anything in the way of color in the symphonies of the contrapuntal masters, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

Wagner was a master polyphonist, but the richness of his colors is not due to the intertwining of his melodies. It is equally resplendent in hundreds of pages which are as homophonic as the works of Berlioz, Weber, or Liszt.

Where, in all orchestral music, is there a more glowing work than the Marguerite movement in the *Faust* of the unpolyphonic Liszt?

No, Strauss is entirely wrong in his argument. In his own glowing scores, the splendor is due to his instinct for coloring and not to his amazing contrapuntal stunts. These, in fact, are an actual detriment. As Ernest Newman has put it, "he often falls a victim to the modern mania for using a pot of paint where a mere brushful would do equally well, or better." The score of the *Domestica*, as the same critic has pointedly put it, "would sound just as well with a third of the notes and several of the players omitted." These are the words of one who, on the whole, is an admirer and champion of Strauss. To cite two or three more of his caustic sentences: "Master of orchestration as he is, there is page after page in the *Symphonia Domestica* containing the grossest miscalculations; time after time we can see what his intention has been and how completely it has been frustrated by his own extravagance. He wants to wear all the clothes in his wardrobe at once."[1]

Another admirer and champion, Max Steinitzer, has written a paragraph which shows that Strauss (though he erred, as we have seen, in claiming too much for polyphonic orchestration) did not encourage those of his apostles who talked about him as if he were an arch revolutionist, and practically the creator of

[1] "Musical Studies", page 303.

the modern art of coloring. "How little desire he had to be considered a reformer of the orchestral apparatus," he writes, "is indicated by many remarks he has made which show that he looks on himself as being simply a pupil of Wagner. On hearing somebody express admiration of the *Salome* orchestration he seemed a little surprised, and, taking up the passages specially referred to, he replied that essentially the same things had been done by the 'Old Man.' Further proof of his attitude may be found in the rare modesty manifested in his edition of Berlioz's work on orchestration. Of the one hundred and fifty-one larger examples in musical type only eight are taken from his own scores: three from *Feuersnot*, two from the *Domestica*, and one each from *Tod und Verklärung*, *Eulenspiegel*, and *Zarathustra*. A remarkable contrast to those of his worshipers who talk as if he originated the art of orchestration."

To a biographer who thus, by telling the plain truth, squelches the ignorant adulators and exaggerators, one is the more willing to lend an ear when he defends the man he writes about against diverse unjust charges. It has often been said that Strauss searched for new instruments merely for the sake of making a sensation by introducing novel sounds in the orchestra. Even had he done so, this would be no crime, for new sounds are desirable when they are agreeable or characteristic. But Strauss introduced the new instruments for purposes of expression. In his *Salome*, for instance, "a new domain of expression" is secured by the use of the heckelphone, an improved kind of bass oboe which Wagner already had dreamt of; but as its narrow bore impaired the sonority, it remained for Strauss

to make the first operatic use of the instrument as improved by Ernest Heckel.

XVI

MAMMOTH ORCHESTRAS

Nor can we look on Strauss as a bold, bad innovator because he likes to use mammoth orchestras. In 1784 a Handel Commemoration was held in London at which the orchestra numbered forty-eight first and forty-seven second violins, twenty-six violas, twenty-one violoncellos, fifteen double basses, six flutes, twenty-six oboes, twenty-six bassoons, one double bassoon, twelve trumpets, twelve horns, six trombones, four drums, two organs.

Berlioz's *Messe des Morts* calls for one principal orchestra, four brass bands, and a separate band of drums and other instruments of percussion. There are no fewer than eight pairs of kettledrums, twelve horns, and sixteen trombones.

Wagner's *Parsifal* requires four flutes, four oboes, two alto oboes, four clarinets, one bass clarinet, four bassoons, one double bassoon, seven horns, three trumpets, four trombones, one bass tuba, four harps, besides kettledrums, bells, and strings.

With these examples in mind, we are less likely to be scandalized on reading that Strauss, in his fullest score (*Elektra*), calls for twenty-four first, second, and third violins, eighteen first, second, and third violas, twelve first and second cellos, eight double basses, four flutes, four oboes (including English horn and heckelphone), eight clarinets (including bass clarinet and two basset-horns), four bassoons, four horns,

four tubas (the players of which sometimes take four more horn parts), six trumpets, six bass trumpets, four trombones, contrabass tuba, and six to eight kettledrums, besides glockenspiel, triangle, tambourin, bass drum, cymbals, tamtam, celesta, and two harps.

It was lucky for Strauss that his operas as well as his tone poems invariably had a sensational success at their first performance, for this made it easier to persuade the managers to expend the extra money needed for such enlarged orchestras and the necessary rehearsals. For the *première*, Strauss has always insisted on compliance with his demands; but for later performances, especially in cities where such mammoth aggregates are out of the question, he has judiciously moderated them.

In his *Domestica* score he introduces a quartet of saxophones borrowed from military bands; they give a richness to the harmonies which I enjoyed immensely when he conducted the world *première* of this work in New York. Concerning their use, he gives the direction that they may be left out, but "only in extreme cases of necessity."

Why is it that, notwithstanding all their orchestral splendors, the later compositions of Strauss often bore us? Because the themes — the melodies — are insignificant. An anecdote will illustrate this. A certain German prince who had written a piece of music once asked Liszt to arrange it for orchestra and bring in the trombones with the same splendid effect as Wagner did in the *Tannhäuser* overture. Liszt, with all his diplomacy, found it difficult to make it clear to him that *the trombones had less to do with it than what they played.*

XVII

TECHNICAL SKILL VERSUS INSPIRATION

Having defended Strauss against the unjust assertion (not approved by him) that he surpassed all other masters in his orchestral splendors, and also against the insinuation that his love for new instruments is born of sheer sensationalism, let us focus our attention on the opinion, very often expressed, that the reason why he is so lavish in the use of rich colors and indulges in such astonishing feats of technical skill, is that he wishes by these methods to hide his lack of ideas.

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford relates in his Memoirs that "Brahms once said to Joachim that he wished that he had half Dvořák's invention." "*Dem fällt immer etwas ein*" (He is never at a loss for an idea) he said of the same composer on another occasion. Brahms himself often was at a loss for ideas, but his command of form and his technical skill were so great that this lack of melodic inspiration did not prevent him from composing away lustily. Any commonplace theme, or group of notes, sufficed to start his pen, and the results were often surprising and commendable — from a technical point of view.

There are judges who hold that in no way does a composer exhibit his mastership more completely than by his ability thus to take insignificant bricks and with them do an architectural "stunt."

"Art for art's sake" this is often called. It should, however, be called technic for technic's sake; for art means infinitely more than technic.

Bach, the first of the great musical architects, built many a fugue that is a marvel from a technical point

of view, though its theme is undistinguished. In genuine musical interest such a piece is, however, vastly inferior to one which, like the famous fugue in G minor, or the stupendous toccata in F, is built up on great ideas — having choice marble for its themes in place of common red bricks.

Max Reger has often been called the modern Bach, because of his marvellous skill in constructing fugues and other polyphonic pieces. But it is only in his technical skill that he resembles Bach. He had none of that great cantor's soaring ideas; and for this reason his structures will soon crumble into ruins. Mere architectural skill — mere ingenuity in the invention of "workable" themes — cannot save them.

The whole history of music proves that only those compositions survive which, besides exhibiting coherence and technical skill, are also blessed with melodic inspiration. Of Schubert's more than five hundred songs, all but about a hundred have vanished. From a technical point of view, most of those that have become obsolete are not inferior to those that still live; they have died because their melodies lack the originality and charm which have endeared the others to music lovers permanently.

Beethoven owes his exalted position in the musical world chiefly to his melodic originality and fecundity.

The dictionaries of musical biography are full of the names of composers who were masters of form and technique, but whose works are no longer sung or played, simply because they lack melodic charm of a lasting kind; names like Hummel, Lachner, Macfarren, Bargiel, Reinecke, Bendel, Dittersdorf, Hauptmann, Thalberg, and a thousand others.

If Liszt had been like Thalberg (whom so erudite a scholar as Fétis considered superior to him both as pianist and composer!) his works, too, would be dead. Time has proved a better judge than the learned Fétis. Liszt's works are now, a generation after his death, more in vogue than ever, *thanks to their melodic originality*. They are alive and will live on because, in the words of his biographer, Arthur Hervey, they "literally teem with melodic ideas"; or, as Saint-Saëns puts it, in them "*la source mélodique coule abondamment.*"

It is foolish to demur against these statements. Judge Time, of the Supreme Court, has spoken; from his verdict there is no appeal.

Now, how is it with Richard Strauss? In his case Judge Time has not yet spoken definitely, for he is still at work; yet already we can guess what will happen for his early works, *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, and *Till Eulenspiegel*, in which there are, as Mr. Newman justly states, "great soaring, sweeping melodies", are much more in demand than the later ones, in which "mere snippets of phrases" which "go contrapuntally with almost anything" are used in place of real melodies.

It is hardly an exaggeration to state that there is more real melody in Liszt's *Préludes* and *Tasso* than in all of Strauss's tone poems put together.

His most eloquent eulogists do not claim the gift of melody for him. His "thematic invention is not commensurate with his other gifts" says James Huneker, which agrees with the opinion of Doctor Muck, who conducted the *Rosenkavalier* alone more than fifty times in Berlin, and who was reported in the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* (in February, 1907) as saying: "Most

of Strauss's later works I find of only passing interest. To three only do I return with pleasure — all of them early works. They are *Till Eulenspiegel, Death and Transfiguration,* and *Don Juan.* And since I have frankly told Mr. Strauss my opinions, I see no reason why I should hesitate to make them public. . . . In his later works his themes are not worthy the marvelous technical development given them."

Romain Rolland could not find in Strauss's works "a single melody truly original and interesting *per se*", that is, apart from its literary associations or harmonic investment. The writer of an article "From *Guntram* to *Elektra*" in the London *Times* (July 23, 1910), sums up the matter in these words: "Melody has never been a strong point in Strauss's equipment. His songs, with a handful of exceptions, are lamentably weak in sustained melody. . . . It is not that he thinks, with Debussy, that melody is antilyrical; it is simply that, like most modern Germans, he does not possess the capacity for writing sustained and original tunes. Musical form and orchestral color apparently absorb his capacity", and "the best of Strauss's melodies canot be called original."

Thus we see that from the all-important melodic point of view, too, the symphonic poem does not culminate in Strauss. Not only Liszt, but Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, and others have surpassed him.

While Judge Time has not yet had his full say about Strauss, a real court of German judges has passed on the question of his melodies. The following chapter, which I contributed as an editorial to the New York *Evening Post,* is concerned with one of the most amusing episodes in musical history.

XVIII

MELODY IN THE COURTROOM

What is melody? This question had to be answered the other day in a German law court. A composer named Noren wrote a symphonic piece entitled the *Kaleidoskop*, in which he embellished a theme of his own with variations introducing two themes from Richard Strauss's *Heldenleben*. It was intended as a deliberate act of homage, as was indicated by the words "To a famous contemporary" printed in the score over the bars cited. Strauss himself had no objections; indeed, he actually congratulated Noren on his achievement. The publisher of *Heldenleben*, on the other hand, protested against the printing and sale of the *Kaleidoskop*, on the strength of Section 13 of the copyright law of 1901, which says: "In a musical composition it is not permissible to take a recognizable melody from it and incorporate it in a new work." The jurists, in course of the trial, appealed to the royal Saxon musical experts for a definition of melody, and got one which at the same time sounds like a justification of those who claim that there is no melody in Strauss's music.

"From the standpoint of musical composition," the royal experts said, "neither the leading theme (in the *Heldenleben*) nor the motive of the opponents is a 'melody.' The science of music makes a strict distinction between motive, leading motive, theme, phrase and melody. While the motive represents the smallest independent oneness of a musical thought, and the theme is a chain of motives that are repeated or linked together, the word melody, in accord-

ance with its origin — *melodia*, allied to *melos*, limb and *ode*, song — signifies a group of tones which embodies the musical thought in artistic, singable form, as an articulated, rounded whole. In the motive as well as in the theme the melodic element may find expression; but a melodious motive or well-sounding theme does not constitute a melody. One may in particular call the main theme in the *Heldenleben* a melodic theme; a melody it is not; and as for the motive of the opponents, that is the direct and conscious negation (*Gegensatz*) of melody." In accordance with this explanation, the Landgericht of Leipsic granted Noren permission to publish his *Kaleidoskop*.

Perhaps Strauss is sorry now that he congratulated the man who cited his music; for not only have the experts failed to find melody in this music, but the court, in announcing its verdict, rubbed salt into the wound by saying: "Inasmuch as the 'melody' still remains the truly attractive and popular part of every musical composition, the new German copyright law has provided for it thorough protection against all unwarranted exploitation. The appropriation of motives and themes in the compositions of others remains, on the other hand, permissible in accordance with Section 13, on the condition that these motives and themes are subjected to a new artistic manipulation and development. The difference thus established between the constituents of the music of another part is not to be wondered at, for a motive or a theme is capable of the most diverse changes and artistic elaborations, whereas a melody, in consequence of the finished form in which it appears, does not permit inversions, shortenings, or other changes without losing its individuality. By means of the new elaboration

of a theme or motive it is therefore possible to produce an entirely new and individual composition, whereas the appropriation of a melody, since it can only be taken as a whole, is usually an act of deliberate plagiarism."

It is difficult to avoid expecting that this verdict will lead to many complications and a number of lawsuits. Strauss's imitators will now be able to steal not only his orchestral thunder and his insulting dissonances, but his very motives and themes. We may expect, too, that the legion of Wagner's imitators will take fresh courage, appropriating the *Nibelung* motives of the dwarfs, gods and giants bodily and constructing new tetralogies therewith. Who is to prevent them, as long as they avoid the complete melodies into which these buds gradually develop in Wagner's scores? The new German copyright law, as interpreted in Leipsic, will certainly prove a boon to the minor composers who have no ideas of their own, and encourage them in their petty pilferings. The borrowing of complete melodies being forbidden, none of them will, however, be able to compete with Handel, whose wholesale appropriations of complete airs by contemporary and older masters earned for him the sobriquet, bestowed on him by one of his most erudite and enthusiastic English admirers, of "The Grand Old Thief."

From another point of view, one cannot but feel glad that this matter has been brought before the courts. The trial has given prominence to the sad truth that the composers of our time are more given to raising buds (themes and motives) in their gardens than the flowers of melody; and it has emphasized the fact that, however pretty buds may be, full-blown

melody remains the most attractive and popular element in music. Unless the younger composers take this lesson to heart, there is no future, and little present, use for their works. A clever musician like Debussy may launch an opera like *Pélléas et Mélisande* with melody deliberately left out of the score, and it may prove a seven-day — possibly even a seven-year wonder, but it will not be heard ten years hence. Every European country has hundreds of immortal folk songs — immortal, though, in their native form, they are simple melodies without harmonic embellishments. But where is there a single composition without genuine melody that has stood the test of time?

More than two decades ago, Saint-Saëns wrote a book entitled "Harmonie et Mélodie", explaining in the preface that he put the "Harmonie" before the "Mélodie" because it seemed necessary to emphasize the importance of that element of music. To-day, he has admitted, he would emphasize the importance of the "Mélodie." In France, as in Germany, and even in Italy, the melodic fount seems to have run dry, and the chief element of novelty lies in daring harmonic experiments. These, and the gorgeous orchestral effects, now at the command of all composers, have their charm and their use; but they will never take the place of melody. That alone bestows lasting life on music.

XIX

FROM DISSONANCE TO CACOPHONY

Reviewing the facts presented in the preceding pages, we see how uninformed and unjust those are who claim that Liszt was merely the pioneer in the realm

of the symphonic poem and Strauss the perfecter. In the choice and presentment of poetic subjects, Liszt's works are superior. In form they are equally coherent, though in a less architectural and more literary way. In melodic content — the supreme test — they are far ahead of Strauss's tone poems. There remains only one more point of comparison. Surely, as an innovator in the realm of harmony, or dissonance, Strauss has surpassed Liszt, has he not?

Most emphatically he has not. It is precisely as a harmonic innovator that Liszt looms up biggest. Even Richard Wagner, who, with the possible exception of Bach and Chopin, is the greatest of all harmonists, sat at the feet of Liszt to learn from him.

Everybody knows how surprising is the harmonic difference between the earlier operas of Wagner, up to *Lohengrin*, and the later ones, beginning with *Rheingold*. This difference is owing to the influence of Liszt, whose epoch-making symphonic poems Wagner studied thoroughly and delightedly during the five years' interval between the two works just named.

So great was this influence of Liszt that Wagner, the great egotist, did not wish to call public attention to it when he wrote his essay on Liszt's symphonic poems, which was unkind of him, for Liszt had done so very much to help him. But in a letter to Hans von Bülow he frankly admitted his indebtedness. "There are many things we gladly confess among ourselves," he wrote; "for example, that *since my acquaintance with Liszt's compositions, I have become quite another fellow as a harmonist.*"

Not only harmonic progressions and modulations did Wagner borrow from Liszt but melodic themes too. At a rehearsal of *Die Walküre* one day, he turned to his

father-in-law and said cheerily: "Here, papa, comes something I got from you." And Liszt answered, good-naturedly, "'Tis well — then it will at any rate have listeners." Poor Liszt's works had none at that time. But "I can wait" he used to say; for he knew his day would come.

The Russian Princess von Wittgenstein, Liszt's companion for many years, knew very well how he had helped to educate the harmonic sense of his greatest contemporaries. Memorable is her remark: "*He shot his arrow even farther into the future than Wagner.*"

The Russian composers, in particular, who have startled the world with their harmonic audacities, have their roots in Liszt's scores. He was the first, too, who made effective use of the whole-tone scale, on which Debussy and his tribe have based a new school. But this point is too technical for these pages.[1]

Strauss is no less bold as a real harmonist than Liszt was, and in his orchestral and operatic scores there are — as we shall see in later pages — some new and splendidly dramatic effects. Too often, unfortunately, he exceeds the limits of the permissible. Liszt never did this. As Professor Riemann has shown, there is a theoretical way out of even his most novel and mysterious labyrinths, the careful study of which he particularly recommends to musicians as a means of cultivating their harmonic sense.

One day a pupil of Liszt brought a manuscript with

[1] Students who are interested in the subject of whole-tone and Hungarian scales, with which Liszt created such a new musical atmosphere, must be referred to pages 419 to 424 of Riemann's "Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven." The Hungarian scale, on which Liszt has built such poignant and epoch-making harmonies, is a sort of intensified minor scale.

outrageous dissonantal combinations. "Such things must not be done," the master declared. "But I have done them," the pupil retorted obstinately; whereupon Liszt took a quill pen, dipped it in ink, and flicked the black fluid on to the young man's white vest, with the words: "That also *can* be done, as you see."

There are too many ink spots, too many dissonantal blotches, on Strauss's pages. Not content, like Liszt and the other great masters, with dissonances which ultimately are resolved into consonances, he "progressed" to cacophonies for their own sake, hideous daubs of sounds which torture the ears like a concert of steamboat whistles on a foggy morning in the bay.

To these cacophonies even the ardent admirers of Strauss feel like saying "out, damned spots!" Read, for example, what Ernest Newman, who in the other respects puts him on so high a pedestal, calls the episode of the Adversaries in the *Heldenleben:* "merely a piece of laborious stupidity"; while the "battle" section is "a blatant and hideous piece of work." He adds that "there must be a flaw, one thinks, in the mind of a man who can deliberately spoil a great and beautiful artistic conception by inserting such monstrosities as these in it."

These "monstrosities" of Strauss have unfortunately engendered and encouraged a whole school of cacophonists, who toss notes with pitchforks. Their leader is Arnold Schönberg. If he and his rivals turn out greater geniuses than Wagner and the other great composers who profited by Liszt's harmonic discoveries, then I am ready to admit that, in the realm of harmony, Strauss progressed beyond his idol.

XX

A GREAT ADVANTAGE OVER LISZT

One day a man came into one of the largest music stores in New York and asked for all the works of Richard Strauss on hand, arranged for piano, four hands. Throwing up his arms, the astonished clerk exclaimed: "Mein Gott, you are velcome to them!"

That salesman had doubtless tried some of the tone poems on the piano and found the cacophonous passages even more ruthlessly vontirpitzian in their frightfulness than they were in the original orchestral form.

It is well known to musicians that a chord which on the piano is unbearably ugly can be actually converted into a thing of beauty by judicious distribution of its constituent tones among orchestral instruments. In this matter Strauss rivals Wagner and Liszt; but the monstrosities just referred to are beyond remedy. Nor does Strauss wish to euphonize them. They stand in stubborn defiance of everybody and everything, like the ugliest bull dog or sesquipedalian dachshund ever invented — incorrigibly Teutonic.

When Josh Billings wrote that "Wagner's music isn't as bad as it sounds" he probably did not realize that there was also a serious side to his joke. For years; nay, for decades, Wagner's music was often played so unintelligently that it really did sound much worse than it was.

So was Liszt's. The music dramas of Wagner and the symphonic poems of Liszt were so novel in structure and spirit that they required for their correct and effective interpretation an entirely new style of conductor.

When Liszt conducted his own orchestral works, in accordance with his new principles of interpretation, the applause was as great as when he played the piano. But when these same works were conducted by old-style time-beaters, they were hissed, or fell flat, or won, at best, a *succès d'estime.*

It was because of these bungling attempts that Liszt took the attitude (which so surprised some of his contemporaries) of usually advising those who contemplated performances of his symphonic poems to leave them alone. There is much food for thought in the following preface to his orchestral works, made public in 1856:

To secure a performance of my orchestral works which realizes my intentions, and give them the right color, rhythm, accent, and life, it will be well to have the *répétition générale* preceded by separate rehearsals for the strings, the wind, the brass, and the percussion instruments. This division of labor saves time and makes it easier for the players to understand the work. I therefore beg the messieurs conductors who are inclined to produce one of these symphonic poems to adopt this method.

At the same time I beg to observe that the mechanical, metronomic, choppy way of playing, which is still practised in many places, is something which I am anxious to have done away with as far as possible. I acknowledge as correct only a periodic reading which gives prominence to special accents, and rounds off the melodic and rhythmic nuances. In the mental conception of the conductor lies the vital nerve of a symphonic performance, provided the means for its realization exist in the orchestra. If that is not the case, it would seem wiser not to take up works like those which by no means aim at an every-day popularity.

Although I have endeavored to indicate my intentions with regard to nuances, accelerations, retardations, etc., as clearly as possible by a detailed employment of the usual expression marks, it would nevertheless be a mistake to

believe that one can put on paper that which constitutes the beautiful or the characteristic. The talent and inspiration of those who conduct and play my works alone command the secrets of such expression; and the amount of sympathy they kindly accord to my works will be the best measure of their success with them.[1]

Richard Strauss's great advantage over Liszt, referred to in the heading of this section, lay in this: that he did not have to worry about conductors and correct interpretations. By the time he gave his tone poem and operas to the world, the new problems presented by the works of Liszt and Wagner had called into existence a new kind of conductor, who interpreted their music in accordance with the principles hinted at in the preface just cited. To these master wielders of the bâton, Strauss's compositions were nuts which, though hard, they had no difficulty in cracking.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this stroke of good luck. If the tone poems of Strauss had been led, at their first productions, by conductors like Mendelssohn, Hiller, Taubert, Lachner, Reinecke, they would have fallen flat as a pancake; whereas the leaders trained by Wagner and Liszt were able to create sensations with them; sensations which gave their composer world-fame and filled his pockets with banknotes.

Liszt died too soon to witness the complete triumph of his works as interpreted by the new school of conductors. In England and France they are still music of the future; but in the cities of Germany they are now

[1] This illuminating little preface is printed in both French and German. The two versions differ considerably. In making this translation, I have taken the best of each, following the French in the first and third paragraphs, the German in the second.

fully appreciated, as they will be in Paris and London when the right conductors appear.

New York has been singularly fortunate. Liszt lived to know that his works were being capably interpreted here by Theodore Thomas as well as by Doctor Leopold Damrosch, one of his personal friends and pupils, to whom he dedicated his *Le Triomphe funèbre du Tasse*. Then came Wagner's favorite and best interpreter, Anton Seidl, who adored also the music of Liszt, because he knew it so well; and he made many others adore it by his inspired readings. Other conductors of the Philharmonic Orchestra, among them Weingartner and Mahler, exhibited their admiration of Liszt by glowing performances. Then came the bequest of three quarters of a million dollars to the Philharmonic by the owner of the New York *World*, Joseph Pulitzer, with the request that the programs should give prominence to the works of his three favorite composers: Beethoven, Wagner, and Liszt. There was no need of this condition, for these three composers had long been general favorites. With Joseph Stransky, the Philharmonic acquired a leader who is the greatest Liszt specialist since Seidl, and who also performs the tone poems of Strauss more glowingly, brilliantly, and convincingly than any one else except Strauss himself. Thanks to him, there has been quite a Strauss cult in New York in recent years.

Boston also rejoices in a conductor whose readings of both Liszt and Strauss are wonderful. Doctor Muck could not conduct the tone poems of Strauss so admirably had he not been trained in the school of Wagner and Liszt. Although the Boston Symphony Orchestra had two good interpreters of Liszt before him —

Henschel and Nikisch — it remained for him to convince the music lovers of that critical city of the full grandeur of this composer. In 1914 he produced the *Faust* symphony. So great was the enthusiasm over its two performances that he decided to give two more. What happened then was related in the Boston *Journal* of April 3:

> Liszt's *Faust* Symphony, featured for the second time this season on Dr. Muck's programmes, drew the biggest crowd of the Symphony season yesterday afternoon, and capped this record by arousing the biggest outburst of enthusiasm witnessed at a Symphony concert for a long, long time.
>
> Hundreds of enthusiasts couldn't get into the hall at all. There has been nothing like this intense interest over a symphony in Boston in recent years, except at one or two special performances of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic* symphony. The *Faust* symphony is gradually forcing its way into recognition as the most impressive musical translation of Goethe's drama. It is wonderfully rich, both in lyrical and dramatic qualities.

"Music of the future it not only was, but is," exclaimed Olin Downes, in the *Post;* adding "Lo and behold! Symphony Hall could not yesterday and cannot to-night contain the people who want to hear music that was the very crown of madness in the 40's — *Faust* symphony."

Philip Hale wrote in the *Herald* that "It is enough to say that the music seemed even more poetic, dramatic, imaginative, imposing." He then paid his compliments to those who are not with the musical public in its enthusiasm over Liszt:

> It is the fashion for some to admit the genius of Liszt in shaping the symphonic poem, in enlarging the scope of the symphony; to admit, though grudgingly, his influence on contemporaries and followers even to this day; but they deny

his creative power, as there are some who find no "ideas" in the music of Berlioz, no skill in thematic treatment, only an unusual sense of orchestral color, and an inexplicable ability in orchestration. Argument is out of the question with these men. They have ears and they do not hear; they will not hear; Berlioz and Liszt are not thus to be idly dismissed. It is not possible to think of modern music without invoking their glorious names and remembering their music. It is pleasant to think that in this city they have long been ranked among the immortals. . . . The performance of the *Faust* symphony yesterday should have turned the most prejudiced, the most "conservative", from the error of his ways.

XXI

STRAUSS AS A JUDGE

Two of my reasons for dwelling at such length on the creative genius of Liszt were given in a preceding paragraph, to wit: the desire to do historic justice to one of the most original and influential personalities in the history of music; and, second, the wish to exhibit Strauss's true place in the development of program music and the symphonic poem, as neither their originator nor perfecter, but simply one of many great composers who followed in Liszt's footsteps, without really surpassing him in any important respect any more than the song writers since Schubert have surpassed this creator and perfecter of the art-song.

To these two reasons another may now be added: the wish to show that Strauss had the genius to appreciate the genius of Liszt at its full value at a time when he shared this gift of full appreciation only with Wagner, Ritter, Saint-Saëns, and a few others.

Steinitzer relates that when Strauss, as a young man, became a Wagner convert, his friends were sur-

prised; but it was incomprehensible to them that he should also become an admirer of Liszt at a time when Liszt's works were so little understood that hisses were often heard at their performance, and most of the musicians looked on him simply as a pianist and — Wagner's father-in-law! "Never," writes this biographer, "shall I forget the distressed mien and air of surprise with which Paul Marsop, when I met him on the street, exclaimed: 'Have you heard the latest? Just think, Strauss has now become a Lisztite, too!'"

It took some musicians of distinction much longer than it did Strauss to understand and adore Liszt. On this point Arthur Friedheim, who was one of Liszt's leading pupils, and whose playing of the great sonata in B minor has never been surpassed, has contributed some interesting illustrations in *The Musician.*

When Friedheim first met Hans Richter, in 1882, that great conductor disliked Liszt's music, but because he liked Liszt personally, he performed some of it, "badly, of course." Fifteen years later Richter had become enthusiastic over the *Dance of Death*, of which he said, "I have grown fond, just as you can get fond of an ugly dog." Later Friedheim discovered from his programs that he had evidently "discovered some more dogs of the kind among Liszt's works."

With Felix Mottl the case was similar. It took him a quarter of a century to discover in *Dante* and *Christus* the genius he might have found in them at once had he studied them with the same attention he gave to Wagner's works. Eugen D'Albert disliked the great Liszt sonata at one time; ten years later it was his battle horse. Nikisch and Weingartner, after two decades of familiarity, brought out details that had long escaped them in Liszt's scores.

In view of such facts, it is surely one of the brightest feathers in Strauss's cap that — let me say it again — he had the genius to recognize the genius of Liszt at once, and also the courage of his convictions in proclaiming him the greatest composer of orchestral music since Beethoven.

XXII

THE SOUL OF WIT

Hero worship is a good thing for the soul. Strauss benefited greatly by his worship at the shrines of Wagner and Liszt. It was only when he deviated from the paths trodden by these two reformers that he blundered. His attitude toward "programs" was an instance. Now let me call attention to another procedure which tends to shorten the life of Strauss's orchestral works.

One of the chief merits of Liszt's symphonic poems is their brevity. The duration of *Tasso* is nineteen minutes; of *Les Préludes*, fifteen; *Orpheus*, twelve; *Mazeppa*, eighteen; *Festklänge*, eighteen; *Héroide Funèbre*, thirteen; *Hungaria*, twenty-two; *L'Idéal*, twenty-eight; *Battle of the Huns*, sixteen; and *Hamlet*, only ten minutes.

Strauss in his tone poems at first followed the good example of Liszt in the matter of brevity, as in other ways. While he had made his Italian symphony last forty-seven minutes, his first symphonic poem, *Macbeth*, wisely contented itself with eighteen. *Don Juan* even bettered that with seventeen minutes, but *Death and Transfiguration* consumes twenty-four. *Eulenspiegel* is so good that it seems short at eighteen minutes. The danger zone begins with *Zarathustra*,

which lasts thirty-three minutes. *Don Quixote* is worse, with thirty-five; not so bad, however, as *Heldenleben* with forty minutes, or the *Domestica* with forty-five. With his *Alpensymphonie*, Strauss reaches the *Eroica* dimensions of fifty minutes.[1]

In his last four or five tone poems he thus loses one of the great advantages of the symphonic poem, which is brevity; and that is one reason why these later works are less frequently performed than the earlier ones. So many compositions, old and new, clamor for admission to concert programs that preference is necessarily given to those which heed the modern demand for conciseness, Brevity is the soul of other things beside wit.

XXIII

STRAUSS IN HIS ELEMENT

It is too bad that the greatest masters of orchestral coloring: Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Schubert, Liszt, Wagner, Dvořák, Grieg, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, did not each write a treatise on this fascinating branch of the tonal art. Berlioz was the only one who did. His treatise was an epoch-making work; from it Wagner, Liszt, Strauss, and all the others coming after him got invaluable hints.

Richard Strauss paid it a remarkable compliment when he refused invitations to write a new treatise on orchestration but, instead, prepared a new edition of Berlioz's, interlarded with remarks of his own. This was published (in German) by C. F. Peters in Leipzig,

[1] These duration figures are culled from the Müller-Reuter "Lexikon der deutschen Konzertliteratur." They are based on performances under the composers themselves or their leading interpreters.

in 1905. It is a book absolutely indispensable to every musician who intends to compose, revealing, as it does, all the secrets of the workshop of Berlioz, with additional copious information by Strauss which brings it quite up to date.

Strauss's remarks are inserted in their proper place in Berlioz's chapters on each instrument, and the publishers have made it easy to find his additions by enclosing them between wavy lines. Many pages are filled with excerpts from the full scores of the masters, to illustrate the text. From his own works Strauss makes only eight citations; from Wagner's sixty-four. The other composers from whose works excerpts are made to illustrate novel and happy instrumental effects are Auber, Beethoven, Berlioz, Bizet, Gluck, Halévy, Liszt, Marschner, Méhul, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Rossini, Spontini, Verdi, and Weber.

To the subject "Strauss as a Judge" these pages add many interesting items. Attention was called in the first part of this book to his admiration for the classical masters, particularly Mozart, of whose works he is considered an ideal interpreter. It is needless to say that titbits of orchestral tinting in their scores never escaped his attention. He cites, for instance, the happy use, in Mozart's *Cosi fan tutte*, of the oboe, with the bassoon two octaves lower, "for the expression of affected coyness."

In the cavatina of the third act of *Euryanthe*, where the heroine, deserted in the woods, is perishing, Weber evoked from the bassoon "the most heart-rending tones of suffering innocence."

Repeatedly, in this treatise, Strauss takes occasion to point out the wide range of emotional expression possessed by most orchestral instruments. The clari-

net, for instance, which Weber employs so exquisitely for the expression of virginal purity, becomes in Wagner's *Parsifal* "the embodiment of demoniac sensuality, sounding, in the Kundry scenes, the awesome, disquieting voices of seduction which no one who has heard will ever forget."

An extremely interesting footnote on page 204 about this same instrument indicates that Strauss by no means believed that he and his predecessors had exhausted the possibilities of orchestral coloring. After naming the members of the large clarinet family, he remarks: "The wealth of clang-tints which I can fancy radiating from the different mixtures of these diverse members of the clarinet family have made me realize how many unutilized treasures there are still in the orchestra for a dramatist and tone poet who knows how to use them for the appropriate expression of new color symbols and for the characterization of new and subtle emotional shades and nervous vibrations."

He laments the fact that in modern orchestras the clarinet in D is still almost always replaced by the E flat clarinet, "although an important rôle has been assigned to it by Liszt in *Mazeppa* and by Wagner in the *Ride of the Valkyries*" (one of those cases where Wagner got a hint from Liszt). Strauss himself uses this same instrument in his *Till Eulenspiegel* "as the humorist", to cite his own words.

Among the other references to Liszt in this treatise is one calling attention to the "compelling realism" of the cymbal stroke in the opening chord of *Mazeppa* — "like the snapping of a whip"; and, in the same wonderful work, to the thrilling horn tone heard as "the last hoarse cry of the dying Cossack chief in the

limitless steppe." Strauss also notes the "extraordinarily poetic use" Liszt has made of the big drum in his *Mountain Symphony* for the suggestion of the distant sublime sound of the sea.

In French works, too, Strauss notes many striking orchestral *aperçus*. Méhul's *Joseph* and Auber's *Masaniello* are among the scores he refers to. In Bizet's *Carmen* there are countless strokes of genius. Strauss calls attention to the "demoniac call of fate of the deep trumpets" in this score. He has a good word even for the much-abused Meyerbeer, "as one of the first who recognized the power of the viola for demoniac suggestion", using it in *Robert the Devil* for the expression of a pious shudder and the pangs of conscience.

Strauss disapproves of the way Verdi uses the trumpets in his last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff* — for reasons which may be found on page 307 of his treatise. He also notes points of excellence in Verdi's scores.

XXIV

THE EPOCH-MAKING FRENCH HORN

Strauss's additions to Berlioz's treatise alone are worth the price of the whole book, which is not only absolutely indispensable to those who wish to compose for the orchestra, but also of great interest to all music lovers who want to thoroughly enjoy the romance of this most entrancing aspect of the art divine. Strauss discourses on recent additions to the orchestra, as well as on obsolete but desirable instruments. He holds that even the flute is capable of a wide emotional range — although Wagner makes little use of it in

his later scores; explains why the piccolo needs further improving in its mechanism; tells why he does not approve of the custom of making all the violinists in an orchestra use the up and down stroke of the bow simultaneously; gives hints as to fingering; describes the effects of mutes on trombones, etc.

Some of his notes have a personal touch, as when he relates how his first clarinetist in the Royal Orchestra in Berlin experimented with mouthpieces of marble, glass, porcelain, rubber, and gold, but finally came back to the old wooden one because of its better tone quality.

By far the most interesting thing in these additions to Berlioz's pages are, however, Strauss's glowing tributes to Wagner, and his explanation of wherein lies the main difference between the orchestration of Wagner and that of Berlioz or Beethoven.

Many writers have ignorantly stated that Wagner got all his ideas about instrumental coloring from Berlioz. Yet any musical expert can tell after hearing a dozen bars which of these two masters "painted" them. There are countless details, especially in the subtle mixtures of brasses with wood-wind instruments, that are the product of Wagner's "Klangphantasie", as Strauss remarks (p. 318); and in many other paragraphs he calls attention to Wagner's original tints and devices in all instrumental families. By augmenting these families so as to represent all the voices in one group, and by endless subdivisions (*violini divisi*, etc.) — in which Strauss followed him — he called into existence entirely new color schemes, as entrancing as they were novel. By this new orchestral magic he was enabled to achieve miraculous effects like that at the close of the second act of *Lohengrin*,

where "the organ sounds, which Wagner so cleverly coaxes from the orchestra, surpass those of the 'Queen of Instruments' herself", as Strauss puts it.

The greatest improvement — an improvement amounting to a revolution — was brought about by Wagner with what we call the French horn (*Waldhorn* or "forest horn" in German). Of the tremendous possibilities of rich and emotional coloring inherent in this glorious instrument Berlioz had no conception; nor did any other master, although Beethoven and Weber had glimpses. Berlioz's pages on the horn are, as Strauss remarks in a footnote (pages 264, 275), mostly antiquated and have now merely a historic value. But as to Wagner and his use of this instrument, listen to Strauss's glowing, ecstatic tribute:

> The horn is perhaps of all instruments that which mixes best with all groups. To prove this in its full significance I should have to copy the whole *Meistersinger* score; for I do not think I exaggerate in saying that it was only the amazing versatility (*Vieldeutigkeit*) and the highly-developed technic of the valve horn which made it possible that this score which, apart from an added third trumpet, a harp, and a tuba, is the same as that of Beethoven's C minor symphony, should have become in every bar something different, new, unheard before.

To be sure, Strauss adds, the two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons already used by Mozart, are in this *Meistersinger* score of Wagner's "employed with an uncanny virtuosic ingenuity and divination of their color secrets which exhausts their expressional possibilities." The string quintet, furthermore, is constantly called upon to provide new marvels of sound by means of subtle subdivisions. The harp gives life, and the glorious polyphony provides "emotional glow without a precedent"; while trumpets

and trombones are made to yield "all their capacity for solemn or comic characterization." Yet "the most essential, outstanding factor is the faithful horn, now intrusted with the melody, now used as a middle part, and again as bass, the horn, of which the *Meistersinger* score is the grand hymn of praise."

"The introduction and perfecting of the valve horn", he continues, "means decidedly the greatest improvement in the technic of orchestration since Berlioz." He then proceeds to illustrate the "protean" nature of the horn by citing a column of instances in which it is used in this opera (which Paderewski considers the greatest work of genius not only in the realm of music but in any department of human activity) and in other works of Wagner for the expression of diverse emotional states.

XXV

IMPROVING THE MUSICIANS

There is an interesting anecdote about Mozart, who, when one of his clarinetists complained about a difficult passage, asked: "Is it possible to do it?" and when answered in the affirmative, added: "Then it is for you to learn how."

In summing up the achievements of Wagner, so far as the orchestra is concerned, Strauss declares that, apart from his greater wealth of ideas, he has improved on Berlioz in three ways in particular: his wealth of polyphony, his exploitation of the valve horn, and his demanding from orchestral players a degree of virtuosity which previously was asked only of soloists playing concertos.

Strauss could not compete with Wagner in the wealth of ideas — particularly melodic ideas — but he strove to go beyond him in polyphonic complexity, in the varied use of the horn, and in asking seeming impossibilities of the players.

A German publisher has had the happy thought of printing separately, for players of the different instruments, books of exercises made up of the most difficult pages written for them in the tone poems of Strauss: "Richard Strauss. Orchesterstudien aus den zehn symphonischen Werken." After mastering these things the violinists, 'cellists, oboists, clarinetists, trombonists, and so on, can play at sight anything ever composed, no matter how unidiomatic it may be or seem. Consequently, those who hold that Strauss has not given to the world any masterworks surpassing those of his predecessors, cannot but concede that he has, at any rate, advanced the cause of music by improving the musicians.

PART IV

NINE TONE POEMS

I

WORKS WITHOUT OPUS NUMBERS

In the biographic section of this volume, reference was made to the fact that Strauss discarded about a hundred of his early compositions before he considered any of his creations deserving of an opus number and printer's ink. Several times he started the opus numbers only to discard them; which shows a laudable and unusual faculty of self-criticism.

Many of the early songs and instrumental pieces were composed for domestic use in the several branches of the Pschorr family; others for an amateur orchestra called the "Wilde Gungl", of which he was a member, playing the violin. The writer of this volume has had no opportunity to see the manuscripts of the pre-opus compositions, and must therefore refer those of his readers who are interested in them to Max Steinitzer, who devotes twenty-five pages to a brief description of these unprinted juvenile efforts.[1] In perusing them, Steinitzer was struck by the evidences of the influence of the classical masters, from Haydn to Beethoven, followed by the romanticists, including Schumann and Chopin. Of Schubert there are few traces in his printed works till we come to the *Rosenkavalier*, but in these early compositions his influence

[1] Consult, also, "Vollständiges Verzeichniss der im Druck erscheinenen Werke von Richard Strauss", with a preface by Richard Specht. Universal Edition No. 2756.

is sometimes strikingly indicated. There is already considerable skill in the handling of forms. In the songs there is no great effort to make the melodic accents coincide with the poetic, or to consult the convenience of singers.

His first piece for piano was a *Schneiderpolka* (Tailor's Polka) dated 1871. There are other short piano pieces, also sonatinas and sonatas; three compositions for voice with or without orchestra; a serenade, some overtures, a *Festmarsch* in two versions, followed by another.

Under the head of chamber music we find a *Concertante* (*minuet* and *andante*) for piano, two violins and cello; a *Festmarsch* for violin, viola, cello, and piano; two trios for piano, violin, and cello; a *Serenade* for violin, viola, cello, piano; a set of Variations, and two pieces for strings with piano.

Among other compositions which, though most of them were not printed, had a temporary vogue in Munich and elsewhere, may be named a chorus from the *Elektra* of Sophocles (printed); a symphony in D minor; a concert overture in C minor; Improvisations and Fugue for piano; a Suite in B flat; *Festmusik* for the golden wedding of the Grand Duke of Sachsen-Weimar; and a Hymn for mixed chorus and grand orchestra.

This brings us to the compositions which Strauss deemed worthy of opus numbers and publication. The first fifteen of these might as well have shared the fate of their predecessors, as they have contributed very little to their composer's renown. They call, however, for brief comment, as they are seen occasionally on programs and are interesting as specimens of the Brahmsian period of Strauss's development,

before he abjured absolute music and attached himself to the programmatic school.

Opus 1 is a boyish *Festmarsch* (1876), in which Ernest Newman finds a "quite amazing vigor of the bantam kind." For a boy of twelve it is a remarkable composition, foreshadowing the fact that the orchestra is destined to become its author's real realm.

Opus 2 (1880), a quartet for two violins, viola, and violoncello, is written in the style of classical chamber music. Steinitzer finds the opening *allegro* "inspired", and far superior to the other movements, which he suspects were written chiefly "for the form's sake" — a criticism which, alas! applies too often to chamber music, even by masters who rank far above Strauss in this branch of the art.

Opus 3 (1881), *Fünf Klavierstücke*, includes five pieces for piano which aroused the ire of Hans von Bülow, whose contemptuous remarks are cited on p. 12 of this volume. Steinitzer thinks Number 4 of this collection, *Elfenstücklein*, well worthy of a place in concert programs.

Opus 4 is a *Konzertouvertüre*, not published.

Opus 5 (1881), sonata for piano in B minor, belongs to the Mendelssohnian stage in Strauss's development, and has few moments of special interest.

Opus 6 (1882), sonata for violoncello and piano is occasionally heard in our concert halls. It has a few individual touches and striking idiomatic details but is far less inspired than the unjustly neglected cello sonatas of Rubinstein and Saint-Saëns.

Opus 7 (1881), *Bläserserenade*, for thirteen wind instruments (two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, double bassoon, four horns), achieved the important distinction of winning the favor of Hans

von Bülow, which meant so much for Strauss. Under date of October 9, 1884, Bülow wrote to Albert Gutmann: "The Serenade for Wind Instruments, Opus 7, by Richard Strauss (a young Municher of the classical school), exhibits the virtuosity of our players in the most brilliant light." He was, indeed, so much pleased with this *Serenade* that he requested Strauss to compose a whole suite for the same instruments, which was done forthwith.

Opus 8 (1881–1882) is a violin concerto in D minor which also is still played occasionally. Its slow movement is inferior to the opening *allegro* as well as to the final *presto*. Commenting on this, Newman makes a remark which is applicable to all of Strauss's works, and not only, as he intimates, to the early ones: "Wherever the youthful Strauss has to sing rather than declaim, when he has to be emotional rather than intellectual, as in his slow movements, he almost invariably fails. . . . In the Violin Concerto and the Violoncello Sonata he wisely cuts the slow movement as short as possible, and gets on to his finale or rondo with an evident sigh of relief." Dvořák once repeated to me a remark of Hans Richter's that the genius of a composer is to be rated by his slow movements. If this is true, then Brahms also falls short.

Opus 9 is a series of piano pieces called *Stimmungsbilder*. Like those of Opus 3, they were sneered at by Bülow, who wrote concerning them to Spitzweg: "A pity that the writing for the piano is so unpolished (*holprig*) and in need of so many improvements. Is it so very difficult to learn the right way from the works of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Raff?" Steinitzer, on the other hand, admires not only the technical aspect of these pieces but declares their composer

"a poet of the piano." He specially recommends No. 1: *Auf stillem Waldespfad* to recital givers.

Opus 10 includes the first of his songs which Strauss considered worthy of print. The other opus numbers comprising songs (or choral works) are 15, 17 (including the *Serenade*), 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 55, 56. These will be commented on in a special section.

Opus 11 (1882–1883) is a concerto for horn. Strauss's father often played this at home but did not dare to do it in public because of one risky note recurring in it repeatedly. It was first played by his pupil, Bruno Hoyer. Bülow liked it well enough to pay the publisher twenty-five dollars for the right to perform it; but he thought the old-fashioned *tutti* in it should be shortened or made more spicy. He had it played at Meiningen and on one of his tours. It is still heard occasionally in German concert halls, usually with piano. What it lacks is the soulful cantilena which is demanded by the French horn as well as the cello.

Opus 12 is the F minor symphony (1883–1884), which Theodore Thomas was the first to produce, at a concert of the New York Philharmonic (December 13, 1884). Strauss himself conducted it at his début in Meiningen on October 18, 1885. Bülow found it quite important (*recht sehr bedeutend*), "original and ripe in form." Brahms said "Quite pretty, young man", and gave Strauss some advice regarding the invention and treatment of themes (see Steinitzer, first edition, pages 35 and 52). In December, 1887, Strauss conducted it at Milan, where, he wrote to Bülow, "the newspapers praised me far more than I deserved. The orchestra presented me with a splendid silver bâton with an inscription. I was very

happy, all the more as my fellow citizens in Munich have certainly not spoiled me with kindness and appreciation."

An elaborate analysis (sixteen pages) of this symphony by Wilhelm Klatte is incorporated in the "Meisterführer Number 6" published in Berlin by Schlesinger. The most remarkable thing about this composition by a man not yet twenty years old is, in Klatte's opinion, its formal perfection: it stands like a well-proportioned architectural monument, with every detail measured off to an inch.

It cannot be denied, however, that its architectural or formal merits overshadow its other qualities, although the orchestration is also commendable. It calls, among other things, for four horns (an unusual demand at that time for a symphony) three trombones, and a bass-tuba. An attempt to give coherence to the work as a whole is made by introducing in the final part the themes of the three preceding movements.

Opus 13 is a piece of chamber music, a quartet for piano and string, in C minor, which received the first prize offered by the Berlin Tonkünstlerverein in 1885. Strauss himself played the difficult piano part when it was given at Meiningen. To Bülow he wrote regarding this occasion that the public liked it, rather to his surprise, "because it is not at all a pleasing and ingratiating work." Its duration is thirty-eight minutes. It betrays the influence of Schumann and Brahms.

Without opus number but belonging in this place is the *Burleske* for piano and orchestra, the only work composed by Strauss in Meiningen (1886). The piano part was written for Bülow, who, however, declared it "unplayable." Strauss himself, as Steinitzer informs us, was inclined to look on this work as "sheer

nonsense." The same biographer, in an interesting footnote, declares that while D'Albert, to whom it is dedicated, played the *Burleske* at Eisenach in 1890, and Hainauer offered a considerable sum for the privilege of printing the score, Strauss wrote to Ritter: "I really need money! What shall I do? I am terribly averse to allowing the publication of a work of mine which I have left far behind and which I cannot any more approve of sincerely." Steinitzer gives a brief analysis of the piece (I, 211). He thinks it is unaccountably neglected.

Opus 16 is the orchestral score *Aus Italien* (From Italy) which calls for more detailed comment because it has remained in the modern concert repertory. Before turning to it, however, let us briefly consider the only remaining piece of chamber music, after writing which Strauss devoted himself entirely to orchestral tone poems, vocal works, and operas.

Opus 18, a sonata for violin and piano, belongs to the same year (1887) as the most popular of Strauss's songs, the *Serenade*, and has much of its buoyancy and sparkle. The influence of Schumann is unmistakable; also that of Chopin, in the second movement, "Improvisation", which has become so popular in Germany that it has been printed separately. The sonata is dedicated to Strauss's cousin, Robert Pschorr, and should last twenty-seven minutes.

II

AUS ITALIEN (*From Italy*)

Just as all Americans are supposed to long for a glimpse of Paris, so all Germans dream of a visit to Italy as the goal of human bliss. Goethe, Jean Paul,

and many other writers have voiced this longing and the joy of its fulfillment.

Richard Strauss's joy at its fulfillment in his case is voiced in his symphonic fantasia *Aus Italien*. After his nearly fatal attack of pneumonia in 1886 he went south of the Alps and there made the sketches for his first orchestral work with a pictorial background — *From Italy*.

What inspired him was a combination of scenic and other impressions with the balmy comfort of escape from the rigors of a northern climate.

Romain Rolland relates in his "Musiciens d'aujourd-hui" that when he saw Strauss in Berlin one icy April morning, the composer said to him with a sigh that he could not create in winter. "He is homesick for the light of Italy. This nostalgia has got into his music, which exhibits one of the most troubled souls of profound Germany combined with a continual longing for the colors, the rhythms, the laughter, the joy of the South."

These colors, rhythms, laughter, and joy of the South Strauss sought to express in his *Aus Italien*. His mind seemed to thaw out in the South. Musical thoughts came to him as on wings, as he wrote to a friend, and there is more warmth as well as fancy in this music than in anything he had previously composed.

The Italian fantasy is program music, as the titles given to the four movements frankly proclaim: 1. "On the Campagna"; 2. "Amid the Ruins of Rome"; 3. "On the Shore of Sorrento"; 4. "Neapolitan Folk Life." The Roman section has this further guide to the composer's thoughts: "Fantastic pictures of vanished splendor, feelings of sadness and anguish in the midst of sunniest surroundings."

Strauss himself called this work the bridge on which he passed from absolute music to music which has a poetic or pictorial background. It is not yet a symphonic poem, for it is not connected in all its parts but is divided, in accordance with the old symphonic pattern, into four detached movements. It is therefore more like the program music of Berlioz than like that of Liszt, in which the poetic subject shapes the composition and the cyclic form is abandoned.

The solitude of the Campagna — the plain which surrounds Rome, desolated by the plague of malaria — is the picture we are expected to keep in mind in listening to the first movement, which is in free form. As the music rises to a climax with a trumpet call, the sun breaks through the mists and the pilgrim gets his first glimpse of the eternal city.

The second movement is constructed in sonata form, thus taking the place, from this point of view, of the ordinary first movement of a symphony. It is a mood picture, in composing which Strauss probably had in his mind some of the most stirring events in Roman history. Fortunately he did not specify these events, thus sparing the hearer the puzzling task of trying to guess where one ends and the next one begins.

The widest appeal is made by the third movement "By Sorrento's Strand." In it Ernest Newman finds "a sensitiveness to pure beauty — to the quality in music that gives the ear the same deep contented joy that the form and color of beautiful flowers give to the eye — that marks a great advance upon anything of the kind that Strauss had attempted previously. Both this and the first movement, indeed, remain to this day among his most truly felt and exquisitely expressed works."

For the first theme of the last movement, depicting "Neapolitan Folk Life", Strauss borrowed (as stated before) a tune he often heard in Naples and which he erroneously supposed to be a folk song: the *Funiculi Funicula*, which was perpetrated by Luigi Denza. Further local color comes from the use of a tarantella, one of the liveliest of Neapolitan dances. In the elaboration of his material Strauss displays, in this movement, that astonishing virtuosity which thenceforth became his hall mark.

Aus Italien is dedicated to Bülow, who apparently could not quite make up his mind whether or not he really liked it. After reading over the score he admitted that it made a deep impression on him as a whole, but added, in a letter to Ritter: "Does age make me a reactionary to this extent? I think that the inspired composer has gone to the utmost limits of tonal possibility (in the realm of beauty), has even overstepped them without compelling necessity." It must be remembered that at that time Bülow had become very conservative and Brahmsian. Yet he wrote at this time to the Munich publisher Spitzweg concerning Strauss: "I think you will always rejoice in the fact that you launched him." "The orchestra is his domain; no one will dispute that." He was impressed by the colossal difficulties of *From Italy*, and doubted if the Berlin Philharmonic could master it in three rehearsals!

III

NO PARSING IN THIS VOLUME

Richard Strauss's orchestral works and operas have been almost as copiously analyzed in essays and mono-

graphs as the music dramas of Richard Wagner. Special guides to the poetic and musical contents of most of them appeared even before their first performance. The more important of these will be mentioned in their proper place. Here I wish to call attention particularly to an excellent guide which covers all of the Strauss tone poems up to the *Domestica*, as well as *Aus Italien* and the symphony in F minor. It is called "Meisterführer" Number 6 (Berlin: Schlesinger) and includes analyses, with copious examples in musical type, by Walden, Klatte, Brecher, Mauke, Teibler, Hahn, and Schattmann; which gives the advantage of viewing these works from different personal angles.

As the present volume is intended for the general reader, no attempt will be made to compete with this "Meisterführer", in so far, at least, as what might be called parsing is concerned. What I mean by parsing is illustrated by an extract from an otherwise admirable general guidebook by an eminent American author. In commenting on the first movement of *Aus Italien* he says: "After a somewhat extended introductory passage a theme is given out by the first violins and 'cellos, with accompaniment of clarinet, bassoon, and horn, with figures for the second violins and violas, and chords for harp. After development the clarinet takes the theme, with responses by horn and bassoon, the movement dying away softly."

The parsing with which helpless children are bothered in school has at least this to be said for it: that it helps to teach the elements of grammar, whereas the two sentences just cited do not teach anybody anything. It is like telling which of the colors on his

palette a painter successively dips his brush into. But what are the poor analyzers to do? You cannot describe music, as you can a painting, and in the case of Strauss, even excerpts in musical type are of little value, because his themes owe so much of their individuality to their polyphonic alliances and their orchestral distribution that playing them on the piano is of little use.

The difficulty of writing about music as such, without indulging in technical jargon intelligible only to those who do not need guides, is so great that one hardly wonders at the eagerness of the writers to get programmatic indications of the contents of new compositions. It explains why Strauss was so beset by these writers for hints as to the "plots" of his pieces in those cases where he at first stubbornly refused to reveal them, preferring to give only a general title and leaving the details to the hearer's fancy.

While abstaining from parsing, I shall attempt in these pages to tell the reader everything tangible and elucidating I know about Strauss's compositions, partly from repeated hearing of most of them and partly from what I have been able to gather in books and newspaper articles. While frankly presenting my own estimate of them, I shall also cite the opinions of critics of divergent views. Time alone can show which of these views are correct. If, thirty years after his death, Strauss's works are as wildly applauded as the compositions of Liszt are to-day, they will be catalogued among the world's masterworks of enduring value.

It is well to bear in mind Brahms's sarcastic retort: "for how long?" to one who had claimed immortality for a certain composition.

IV

MACBETH

Having used his *Italian Fantasy* as a bridge to cross from the absolute side of music to the side in which it has poetry as an ally, Strauss gave to the world in 1888 his *Don Juan*, and a year later his *Death and Transfiguration*. *Macbeth* followed in 1890. But while the third to be made public, *Macbeth* is really the first of his symphonic poems. It was sketched and scored in 1886, but subsequently remodeled, reorchestrated, and otherwise retouched.

In those days Strauss was not yet sufficiently famous to be besieged by friends and journalists for "the story" of his compositions. He contented himself, therefore, with the simple title, *Macbeth*, to which he added only one guide post: the words "*Lady Macbeth*"; writing also into his score these lines from Act I Scene 5 of Shakespeare's play:

> Hie thee hither
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
> And chastise with the valor of my tongue
> All that impedes thee from the golden round
> Which Fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crown'd withal.

Not only did Strauss supply no further details, but he seems to have had no definite plan in his head when he composed this work. We may infer this from what Müller-Reuter says, on the authority of Strauss himself: "In its original form *Macbeth* ended in D minor with a triumphal march of Macduff. To this ending Hans von Bülow objected on the ground that while an Egmont overture might end with a triumphal

march of Egmont, *Macbeth* could not close with a triumphal march of Macduff. In consequence of this, Strauss changed the ending and modified many 'tame' places in the score." The word "modified" in this sentence is "writ sarcastic", for what Strauss did was to pile Pelion on Ossa in the way of dissonances.

Doctor Arthur Seidl, who was a classmate of Strauss, and who has written two books about him, says in one of them ("Richard Strauss: Eine Characterskizze"):

> As in *Don Juan* the composer expresses, with the utmost precision, the intoxication of enjoyment which leads to disgust and satiety, so in *Macbeth* his subject is the madness of relentless cruelty. He strives to depict in tones the wild demonic horror of this terrible character; no color is too crude for his purpose — no manner of expression too harsh. Nay, it sometimes seems as if the boundaries between the psychic and the physical were obliterated, as if the composer attempted with overwhelming power to present to the eye and the mind's eye a thrilling picture of unprecedented grandeur and frightfulness. Those who admire a creative impulse of elemental strength and complete independence will know how to appreciate at its true value the genius of this strong, ruthless, incisive piece of poetry in tones.

Attention is also called to the fact that while Strauss's *Macbeth* is "after Shakespeare" it is concerned "more with inner processes than outer events"; it is "psychological and not narrative."

Concerning Strauss's treatment of Lady Macbeth, an English writer has said that he "does not conceive of her as a virago with no instinct but that of cruelty; of the 'undaunted mettle' of one who 'should bring forth men-children only' there is but little trace; it is rather a coldly-cruel and subtly-calculating character,

yet capable of great tenderness, which he seems to be depicting."

Teibler characterizes the Lady Macbeth theme as "ingratiating and yet awe-inspiring, cold, and glassy", and he further remarks that "Strauss thus does not follow Heine in championing the Lady's amiability, nor is she to him the 'evil beast.' Rather does he recognize her immeasurable love for Macbeth, which compels her to show him the way which, according to her demonic view, must lead him and her to the highest pinnacle of happiness."

According to the commentators, another of the themes is "typical of the love of Macbeth for his queen." But most of the themes and phrases (Teibler cites sixteen) are virile, martial, sinister, awesome, depicting irresolution, cruelty, soul-torture, wild terror, despair.

To a musician it is interesting, on perusing the score or hearing it performed, to note how the themes, treated as leading motives after the manner of Liszt and Wagner, follow one another and recur with kaleidoscopic changes of color and mood. Strauss's polyphonic art, his rare skill in intertwining themes, is already in evidence in this work, which was completed when he was twenty-six.

From the point of view of form, Ernest Newman thinks *Macbeth* is superior to *Don Juan;* and he admires it because it is "all psychology and no action." Were Strauss to write a *Macbeth* to-day, he adds, "he would probably not be content with the soul alone of the character; he would make him pass through a series of definite adventures, and the score would be half penetrating psychology and half exasperating realism. His taste was purer in 1887."

Macbeth is scored for the usual quintet of string instruments, two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, double bassoon, four horns, three trumpets, bass trumpet, three trombones, bass tuba, three kettledrums, bass drum, side drum, cymbals, and tamtam. The duration should be eighteen minutes. The first performance was at Weimar, from manuscript, under Strauss's own direction, on October 13, 1890. Of the nine tone poems it is the least frequently heard. The dedication is to Alexander Ritter, the musician who converted Strauss to the gospel of Liszt and Wagner.

The substance of an amusing letter written by Strauss to Ritter a few days after the Weimar *première* of *Macbeth*, is printed by Steinitzer: "There were some persons present who perceived that the horrible dissonances stood for something more than mere joy in cacophony, namely, an idea." Bronsart confessed frankly that he "couldn't make anything of the piece." Lassen applauded furiously. Bronsart asked him if he liked it. "No," said Lassen, "but Strauss I must applaud." "Both of these men had heard nothing but interesting new *sounds* in *Macbeth*. O, if I only could exterminate the accursed euphony!!"

In the way of exterminating euphony (or honeyed sounds) he went much farther in his later works; but *Macbeth* was already too much for most of his colleagues. Like Bronsart and Lassen, Hans von Bülow found the "Macbethian witches — kitchen-boilings and steamings" too rude for his ears at first. Yet when he had heard Strauss conduct it in Berlin, in 1892, he wrote to his wife "*Macbeth* is for the most part crazy and deafening, but inspired in the highest degree." In French he added: "*Imagine toi: Macbeth énorme*

succès — je n'en revieus pas. C'est qu'il y a énormément d'électricité dans l'air." And to his friend Spitzweg: "The success of *Macbeth* to-day was colossal. Strauss was recalled four times. It must be admitted that the work made an overwhelming impression. Never before has its composer had such a reception here."

The New York Philharmonic, which made a record in performing the F minor symphony before Europe heard it, did not give its patrons a chance to hear *Macbeth* till November 16, 1916. It was also my first hearing of it, and here is my impression of it as printed in the *Evening Post:*

Macbeth belongs to the very best period of Strauss's creative activity, the period of the *Serenade* and *Don Juan*. Why, then, is it neglected, while *Don Juan* is played more frequently than anything Strauss ever wrote? The answer to this question was given last night. The performance, under Mr. Stransky, was simply superb: it was followed by applause so loud and so prolonged that the conductor finally asked his men to get on their feet, whereupon it was redoubled. The audience had enjoyed the virtuosity of the Philharmonic; it had enjoyed also the amazing polyphonic skill of the composer, his splendid command of tone-colors, his audacious way of hurling huge masses of sound from the stage. But if any one in that big audience of three thousand discovered in the *Macbeth* score any melodic strain, such as alone can secure real vogue for a composition, she or he was more fortunate than the writer of these comments. From the melodic, that is, the vital point of view, this tone poem is a failure. In all other respects it is a masterwork. As program music it is commendable because there is no complicated plot, as there is in its companions, for the hearer to dovetail with the music, a perplexing job. It is simply *Macbeth* and the hearer can guess from the turbulence of the music what soul struggles and agonies the composer had in mind when he put his notes on paper.

The unmelodiousness of *Macbeth* was the more felt because it followed fifty minutes of Schubert — his last symphony, which is all melody. Nor do the colors of this masterwork of Schubert seem the least faded in comparison with the Strauss colors.

V

DON JUAN

Unlike *Macbeth*, *Don Juan* has an abundance of melody. It has more melody than any of the other works of Strauss, and that is why it is the most popular of them all. You cannot get away from it. What the musical public — the best musical public — wants now, has always wanted, and always will want in music more than anything else, is melody, melody, and always melody. The reason why the symphonic poems of Liszt still have a place in concert programs after more than half a century of existence is that they are full of melody. The most melodious of them, *Les Préludes* and *Tasso*, are the most popular; and so in the case of Strauss; in proportion as melody exists in the different tone poems will their years be prolonged.

Melody is in music what love is in life.

If music be the food of love, love, in turn, is the food of musicians. Birds sing their spring melodies only in the time of courtship, and composers chant most sweetly when their theme is love. Strauss's best and most popular song, the *Serenade*, is, as its title indicates, a love song; it is the invitation of a lover to his sweetheart to meet him by moonlight alone in the garden. And his best and most popular symphonic poem, *Don Juan*, also has a lover for its theme.

To be sure, there are various kinds and degrees of love, from the primitive passion of a coarse man who desires a woman just as he does a bottle of whisky, to the romantic and altruistic affection of a true lover who would give up his life for the beloved; and then down again — far down — to the diseased state of mind (necrophily as illustrated in Strauss's *Salome*). To which of these kinds does his *Don Juan* belong?

Because of Strauss's great admiration for Mozart, one might guess that his tone poem was likely to be based on the same version of the old Spanish legend as that composer's *The Libertine Punished, or Don Giovanni*, which stages some of Don Juan's flirtations and then shows his undoing by the stone-ghost — the walking statue of the father of one of his victims which he had insolently invited to share his supper with the girls. But this is not the subject of Strauss's work; nor did he follow in the footsteps of Byron's famous poem.

His Don Juan is the hero of an epic poem by the famous Hungarian-German poet, Nikolaus Lenau, whose real name was Niembach von Strahlenau, and who became insane before he could complete it. He was of a restless, saving disposition and once (in 1832), tired of Europe, he spent some months in the United States, exploring the West on horseback. What he saw did not please him; he seems to have been as hard to satisfy enduringly as his Don Juan, who is an embodiment of the Spanish legend in its oldest form, in which it is intended to teach the disastrous results of sensual excesses.

Strauss left no doubt as to which of the many Don Juans of Spanish, German, French, Italian, and other poets he had in mind, for on a flyleaf of the score he

printed the following monologues of Don Juan from Lenau's poem:

Den Zauberkreis, den unermesslich weiten,
Von vielfach reizend schönen Weiblichkeiten
Möcht ich durchziehn im Sturme des Genusses,
Am Mund der letzten sterben eines Kusses.
O Freund, durch alle Räume mocht ich fliegen,
Wo eine Schönheit blüht, hinknien vor Jede,
Und, wärs auch nur für Augenblicke, siegen.

Ich fliehe Ueberdruss und Lustermattung,
Erhalte frisch im Dienste mich des Schönen,
Die Einzle kränkend, schwärm ich für die Gattung,
Der Odem einer Frau, heut Frühlingsduft,
Drückt morgen mich vielleicht wie Kerkerluft
Wenn wechselnd ich mit meiner Liebe wandre
Im weiten Kreis der schönen Frauen,
Ist meine Lieb' an jeder eine andre;
Nicht aus Ruinen will ich Tempel bauen.
Ja, Leidenschaft ist immer nur die neue;
Sie lässt sich nicht von der zu jener bringen,
Sie kann nur sterben hier, dort neu entspringen,
Und kennt sie sich, so weiss sie nichts von Reue.
Wie jede Schönheit einzig in der Welt,
So ist es auch die Lieb', der sie gefällt,
Hinaus und fort nach immer neuen Siegen,
So lang der Jugend Feuerpulse fliegen!

Es war ein schöner Sturm, der mich getrieben,
Er hat vertobt, und Stille ist geblieben,
Scheintot ist alles Wünschen, alles Hoffen;
Vielleicht ein Blitz aus Höh'n, die ich verachtet,
Hat tötlich meine Liebeskraft getroffen,
Und plötzlich ward die Welt mir wüst, umnachtet;
Vielleicht auch nicht; der Brennstoff ist verzehrt,
Und kalt und dunkel ward es auf dem Herd.

The following excellent English version of these lines, a version which does not sacrifice sense to rhyme,

is by John P. Jackson, who also made good translations of some of Wagner's librettos, one of them on the battlefield while serving as correspondent of the *New York Herald:*

O magic realm, illimited eternal,
Of gloried woman, O loveliness supernal!
Fain would I, in the storm of stressful bliss,
Expire upon the last one's lingering kiss!
Through every realm, O friend, would wing my flight,
Wherever Beauty blooms, kneel down to each,
And, if for one brief moment, win delight!

I flee from surfeit and from rapture's cloy,
Keep fresh for Beauty service and employ,
Grieving the One, that All I may enjoy,
The fragrance from one lip to-day is breath of spring;
The dungeon's gloom perchance to-morrow's luck may bring.
When with the new love won I sweetly wander,
No bliss is ours upfurbish'd and regilded;
A different love has This to That one yonder, —
Not up from ruins by my temples builded.
Yea, Love Life is, and ever must be new,
Cannot be changed or turned in new direction;
It cannot but there expire — here resurrection;
And, if 'tis real, it nothing knows of rue!
Each beauty in the world is sole, unique;
So must the Love be that would Beauty seek!
So long as Youth lives on with pulse afire,
Out to the chase! To victories new aspire!

It was a wond'rous lovely storm that drove me;
Now it is over; and calm all round, above me;
Sheer dead is every wish; all hopes over shrouded, —
'Twas p'r'aps a flash from heaven that so descended,
Whose deadly stroke left me with powers ended,
And all the world, so bright before, o'erclouded;
And yet p'r'aps not! Exhausted is the fuel;
And on the hearth the cold is fiercely cruel.

In prose, the substance of this poem was thus briefly summed up by Lenau himself: "My Don Juan is no hot-blooded man eternally pursuing women. It is the longing in him to find a woman who is to him incarnate womanhood, and to enjoy, in the one, all the women on earth, whom he cannot as individuals possess. Because he does not find her, although he reels from one to another, at last Disgust seizes him, and this Disgust is the Devil that fetches him."

When Hans von Bülow, intending to perform *Don Juan*, wrote to Strauss for details regarding its interpretation the composer complied.[1] At the same time he begged Bülow to allow no thematic analysis to be inserted in the program but only the verses of Lenau that are printed on the first page of the score. Thus did Strauss endeavor to follow the good example of Liszt with this program; but the commentators would not have it so. The best of them, Wilhelm Mauke, made an analysis of *Don Juan*,[2] excellent from a technical point of view, but particularizing in such a way that the reader of his analysis who tries to keep it in mind while listening to the orchestra is apt to lose the charm of the music because he wastes most of his attention on the attempt to apply the "clues" in their proper places — which was the reason why Wagner objected to Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*.

In a word, the commentators did their best to make a Berlioz of Strauss when he wanted to be a Liszt.

Under these circumstances it seems hardly fair for Ernest Newman (p. 70) to chide Strauss for writing a certain sequence of notes "to signify a feeling of

[1] Conductors should not fail to look up in Steinitzer, first edition, p. 163, what Strauss says regarding the *tempi* in this score.

[2] Included in Schlesinger's "Musikführer number 6."

satiety in Don Juan's heart" thus "striving to make music perform a purely intellectual task for which it is quite unfitted."

Wilhelm Mauke culls from the score sixteen themes, or motives, and although Strauss had unmistakably indicated that he had in mind Lenau's poem, Mauke and other commentators introduce characters from Mozart's opera — Zerlina and Anna — as being illustrated by some of these motives, besides Don Juan's invitation of the statue in the cemetery to sup with him, preceded by the duel and "the fatal sword-thrust, represented by a piercing dissonant high trumpet note."

The first performance of *Don Juan* was given under the composer's own direction at Weimar on November 1, 1889. Strauss was recalled five times, and the audience tried, though in vain, to make him repeat it. Concerning this event Bülow wrote to his wife: "Strauss is enormously popular here. His *Don Juan*, two days ago, had a most unheard-of success." A year later Bülow, while preparing the Berlin Philharmonic for a performance, under Strauss, of the same score, wrote to him: "Your most grandiose *Don Juan* has taken me captive."

Remember that Bülow at this time had become an ardent champion of Brahms and was hostile to musical "Progressiveness." Brahms's High Priest, Doctor Hanslick, on the other hand, could see nothing to praise in *Don Juan*. He called it a "tumult of dazzling color daubs" and found that Strauss had "a great talent for false music, for the musically ugly." The score seemed to him to consist of "short incipient melodies, shreds of Wagnerian motives, flying about aimlessly; in vain we wait for a development of musical ideas."

The instruments employed in this tone poem are practically the same as in *Macbeth.* The duration is seventeen minutes.

VI

DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION

The most poetic of American writers on music, Lawrence Gilman, has a chapter in his "Nature in Music" on "Death and the Musicians" in which he dwells particularly on Schubert's thrilling song *Death and the Maiden;* Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony,* into which the composer emptied "all that he knew of anguished apprehension and foreboding, of grief that is unassuageable, of consternation and despair"; Wagner's *Isolde's Liebestod,* a "sublimated hymn to death"; Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration.* Concerning the last-named he remarks that "the majestic and plangent conception of Strauss again recalls an evocative phrase of Whitman, unwearying prophet of spiritual resurrections: the superb vistas of death. There are such vistas in this tone poem of Strauss."

It is not strange that these musical poems of death are so universally liked, for we all love to shudder at awesome thoughts of the hereafter, although few of us can take the matter as philosophically as did Socrates, who argued that it is foolish to fear death, because when we are here he is not, and when he is here we are not.

In Germany, for a number of years, *Death and Transfiguration* was played, in response to popular demand, even more frequently than *Don Juan.* It was composed in 1889 and dedicated to the composer's friend, Friedrich Rösch. The first performance was from manuscript at one of the festivals of the Allge-

meine Deutsche Musik-Verein (founded by Liszt), at Eisenach, on June 21, 1890, under the direction of Strauss, who also, on this occasion, conducted the first performance of his *Burleske*, with D'Albert at the piano. The duration of the tone poem is officially given as twenty-four minutes.

The "program" of this composition is a poem written by Alexander Ritter *after* the music had been composed; but as Ritter was Strauss's most intimate friend at this time, and as, moreover, Strauss printed Ritter's lines on a flyleaf of his score, it may be assumed that it met with his approval, even if, as some commentators hold, it cannot be dovetailed with the music in all of the details.

Ritter's poem, in the original German, is herewith reproduced in the abbreviated form adopted by Strauss for his score. In the original form, printed in Eisenach and Weimar programs, there were twenty-two lines preceding the following.

In der ärmlich kleinen Kammer
Matt vom Lichtstumpf nur erhellt,
Liegt der Kranke auf dem Lager.
Eben hat er mit dem Tod
Wild verzweifelnd noch gerungen
Nun sank er erschöpft in Schlaf,
Und der Wanduhr leises Ticken
Nur vernimmst du im Gemach,
Dessen grauenvolle Stille
Todesnähe ahnen lässt.
Um des Krankenbleiche Züge
Spielt ein Lächeln wehmuthvoll.
Träumt er an des Lebens Grenze
Von der Kindheit goldner Zeit?

Doch nicht lange gönnt der Tod
Seinem Opfer Schlaf und Träume.

Grausam rüttelt er ihn auf
Und beginnt den Kampf auf's Neue.
Lebenstrieb und Todesmacht!
Welch' entsetzensvolles Ringen!
Keiner trägt den Sieg davon,
Und noch einmal wird es stille!

Kampfesmüd' zurückgesunken,
Schlaflos, wie im Fieberwahn,
Sieht der Kranke nun sein Leben,
Tag um Tag und Bild um Bild
Inn'rem Aug' vorüberschweben.
Erst der Kindheit Morgenrot,
Hold in seiner Unschuld leuchtend!
Dann des Jünglings keckes Spiel —
Kräfte übend und erprobend —
Bis er reift zum Männerkampf,
Der um höchste Lebensgüter
Nun mit heisser Lust entbrennt.
Was ihm je verklärt erschien
Noch verklärter zu gestalten,
Dies allein der hohe Drang,
Der durch's Leben ihn geleitet.

Kalt und höhnend setzt die Welt
Schrank' auf Schranke seinem Drängen,
Glaubt er sich dem Ziele nah',
Donnert ihm ein "Halt!" entgegen;
"*Mach' die Schranke dir zur Staffel,*
Immer höher nur hinan!"
Also drängt er, also klimmt er,
Lasst nicht ab vom heil'gen Drang
Was er so von je gesucht
Mit des Herzens tiefstem Sehnen,
Sucht er noch im Todesschrein,
Suchet, ach! und findet's nimmer
Ob er's deutlicher auch fasst,
Ob es mählich ihm auch wachse,
Kann er's doch erschöpfen nie,
Kann es nicht im Geist vollenden.

Da erdrohnt der letzte Schlag
Von des Todes Eisenhammer,
Bricht den Erdenleib entzwei,
Deckt mit Todesnacht das Auge.

Aber möchtig tonet ihm
Aus dem Himmelsraum entgegen,
Was er sehnend hier gesucht:
Welterlösung, Weltverklärung.

Of this poem William Foster Apthorp made the following prose translation for the program book of the Boston Symphony Orchestra:

In the necessitous little room, dimly lighted by only a candle-end, lies the sick man on his bed. But just now he has wrestled despairingly with Death. Now he has sunk exhausted into sleep, and thou hearest only the soft ticking of the clock on the wall of the room, whose awful silence gives a foreboding of the nearness of death. Over the sick man's pale features plays a sad smile. Dreams he, on the boundary of life, of the golden time of childhood?

But Death does not long grant sleep and dreams to his victims. Cruelly he shakes him awake, and the fight begins afresh. Will to live, and power of Death! What frightful wrestling! Neither bears off the victory and all is silent once more.

Sunk back tired of battle, sleepless, as in fever-frenzy the sick man now sees his life pass before his inner eye, trait by trait and scene by scene. First the morning red of childhood, shining bright in pure innocence! Then the youth's saucier play-exerting and trying his strength — till he ripens to the man's fight, and now burns with hot lust after the higher prizes of life. The one high purpose that has led him through life was to shape all he saw transfigured into a still more transfigured form. Cold and sneering, the world sets barrier upon barrier in the way of his achievement. If he thinks himself near his goal, a "Halt" thunders in his ear. "Make the barrier thy stirrup! Ever higher and onward go!" And so he pushes forward, so he climbs, de-

sists not from his sacred purpose. What he has ever sought with his heart's deepest yearning, he still seeks in his death-sweat. Seeks — alas! and finds it never. Whether he comprehends it more clearly or that it grows upon him gradually, he can yet never exhaust it, cannot complete it in spirit. Then clangs the last stroke of Death's iron hammer, breaks the earthly body in twain, covers the eye with the night of death.

But from the heavenly spaces sounds mightily to greet him what he yearningly sought for here; deliverance from the world, transfiguration of the world.

In the opinion of Professor Niecks (which I share) "the program of *Tod und Verklärung* is not only a more sufficient guide than that of *Don Juan*, but also the most musical of all Strauss's programs." Mr. Newman thinks that in this work "Strauss has come nearer than anywhere to that fusion of matter and style that is the ideal of all the arts." To Max Steinitzer this score is "already a classic."

Strauss's indebtedness to Liszt is emphasized by Wilhelm Mauke, in his elaborate thematic analysis of *Death and Transfiguration* (in "Musikführer Number 6"):

Franz Liszt, in his symphonic poem, *The Lament and Triumph of Tasso*, has expressed in musical terms the great antithesis in the fate of a genius who is ignored while living and glorified after death, and he has done this with such overwhelming might of musical utterance that it will not be easy to surpass him. The spiritual heir of both Liszt and Wagner, Richard Strauss has created a piece of program music which is formed entirely after the model of *Tasso*. In *Tod und Verklärung* we find the same ideal contrasts as in Liszt's symphonic poem based on Goethe's drama. But both composers generalized the subject, transferring it from the individual to mankind as a whole.

Sixteen pages, with twenty-one illustrations in musical type, are devoted by Herr Mauke to an elaborate

analysis of the structure of this score. The names given to some of the themes are "Death motive", "Fever motive" (there are two of these), "Life-preservation motive", "Childhood", "Ideal motive."

To students of music such an analysis is doubtless useful, but for concert-goers, Ritter's poem, or even the mere title of the work is, in the opinion of another ardent apostle of Strauss, Max Steinitzer, quite sufficient. He does not approve of Mauke's symbolical generalization of the subject, maintaining that "such a method of distilling is not at all Straussian." When apostles disagree, who shall decide?

VII

TILL EULENSPIEGEL'S MERRY PRANKS

Wagner was fifty-five years old before he gave to the world his only humorous opera, *Die Meistersinger*. Strauss, too, for a long time, cultivated the serious muse exclusively; but he was only thirty when he wrote a work which, as its title indicates, belongs to the comic *genre*.

In the case of *Till Eulenspiegel* it was his intention, as in previous cases, to give merely the title, letting the hearer guess the details and enjoy the music for its own sake. But he was not allowed to have his own way.

When Franz Wüllner was preparing to conduct the first performance of the work (in Cologne) he wrote to the composer for a short explanatory program of its poetic contents. Strauss replied: [1]

[1] Although a part of this answer was printed on a preceding page, it is repeated here for the reader's convenience.

"It is impossible for me to give a program of *Eulenspiegel;* were I to put into words what I had in mind in composing the different parts, they would often seem queer and might even give offense. Let us therefore leave it to the hearers themselves to crack the nuts the rogue hands to them. By way of helping them to a better understanding, it seems sufficient to point out the two *Eulenspiegel* motives, which, in the most manifold disguises, moods, and situations pervade the whole up to the catastrophe when, after he has been condemned to death, Till is strung up to the gibbet. For the rest, let them guess at the musical jokes which a rogue has offered them."

The motives indicated by Strauss to Wüllner were the opening theme of the introduction, the horn theme following it, and the descending interval expressive of condemnation and the scaffold.

The full title: *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, nach alter Schelmenweise — in Rondo form — für grosses Orchester gesetzt, von Richard Strauss* — gave rise to considerable controversy in America, to which Philip Hale refers in one of his excellent disquisitions in the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Program Books: "There has been dispute concerning the proper translation of the phrase '*nach alter Schelmenweise*' in the title. Some, and Mr. Apthorp is one of them, translate it 'after an old rogue's tune.' Others will not have this at all, and prefer 'after the old, — or old-fashioned, — roguish manner', or, as Mr. Krehbiel suggests, 'in the style of old-time waggery', and this view is in all probability the sounder."

Who was Till Eulenspiegel? Every schoolboy in Germany could answer that question, but for American readers it may be advisable to state that he was a

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medieval clownish wag (*Schalksnarr*) who died in 1350 at Molln near Lübeck, where one may still see his tombstone "with an owl (*Eule*) and a mirror (*Spiegel*). He was made the hero of an old book of the fifteenth century which tells of his roamings, during which he plays all sorts of pranks, some of them very coarse, on all sorts of people. Those finally send him to the gallows, but his ingenuity saves him at the end, and he dies peacefully in bed — in the book, but not in the tone poem of Strauss, who found the gallows better suited to his fancies than the bed."

Philip Hale calls attention to the fact that the Flemish also call "Tile" their own, and that they, too, show his tombstone, which is as spurious as to its inscription as the one at Lübeck. From a Belgian author, Eugene Bacha, Mr. Hale translates the following description of "Tile":

A rogue who journeyed through the world with nothing but a clever wit in his wallet; a knowing vagabond, who always got out of a scape, he visited all cities, and plied all trades. Baker, wheelwright, joiner, musician, mountebank, he lived at the cost of the simple bourgeois caught by his chatter. A good fellow, with a kindly air, always ready to amuse. Tile pleased everybody and was welcomed everywhere. He was not innately bad. He frankly lived, cheated, stole. When he was grabbed by the collar and hauled along to the gallows, he went as a matter of course without knowing why. He took life after the manner of a poet, and he also took the goods of others. With nose on the scent, empty stomach, gay heart, he went along the road, talking with passers-by, joining gay company, concocting constantly a sly trick to put something between his teeth. And he always succeeded. A curé's servant, charmed by his behavior, took him in her service; a lord, trusting in his talent as a painter, lodged and fed him for months; or Tile suddenly became a physician. Naturally

unfaithful to every promise, he insisted on payment in advance and slipped away at the lucky moment. Thus in the Middle Ages this amusing fellow personified the triumph of nimbleness of wit over bourgeois dulness, foolish haughtiness, and vanity.

Some think that Murner, then in open revolt against the clergy, told the life of Tile as a satire in behalf of religious revolt, to throw ridicule on smug monks, vicious lords, egoistic bourgeois. Others would have the satire general; Eulenspiegel, the looking-glass of owls, stands for the mirror of humanity, just as the Fleming speaks of the vulgar crowd as hibous, and the top gallery in Flemish theatres is called the uylenkot, the owl-hole.

While Strauss would have preferred to leave the poetic details of his *Eulenspiegel* to the imagination of the hearers, he yielded to the request of Wilhelm Mauke and marked into his copy of the score with lead pencil the following names for the leading motives: (1) "Once upon a time there was a *Volksnarr*"; (2) "Named *Till Eulenspiegel*"; (3) "That was an awful hobgoblin"; (4) "Off for New Pranks"; (5) "Just wait, you hypocrites!" (6) "Hop! On horseback into the midst of the market-women"; (7) "With seven-league boots he lights out"; (8) "Hidden in a Mouse-hole"; (9) "Disguised as a Pastor, he drips with unction and morals"; (10) "Yet out of his big toe peeps the Rogue"; (11) "But before he gets through he nevertheless has qualms because of his having mocked religion"; (12) "Till as cavalier pays court to pretty girls"; (13) "She has really made an impression on him"; (14) "He courts her"; (15) "A kind refusal is still a refusal"; (16) "Till departs furious"; (17) "He swears vengeance on all mankind"; (18) "Philistine Motive"; (19) "After he has propounded to the Philistines a few amazing theses

he leaves them in astonishment to their fate"; (20) "Great grimaces from afar"; (21) "Till's street tune"; (22) and (23) are two of Mauke's motives not labeled by Strauss; (24) "The Court of Justice"; (25) "He still whistles to himself indifferently"; (26) "Up the ladder! There he swings; he gasps for air, a last convulsion; the mortal part of Till is no more."

As clues to the thoughts that apparently were in Strauss's mind when he composed the music, these titles are interesting. The objection to them — which he himself understood, and which made him wish to keep these details to himself, is that no one, even after memorizing the clues in proper order, would be able to apply them in their places on listening to the orchestral performance, unless he followed it with a score on his knees. No one but an occasional student does such a thing, wherefore *Till Eulenspiegel* would have been a failure if it had depended for its proper appreciation on such a method of listening to it.

It is obvious, too, that most of the details in this elaborate program cannot be expressed in music with such an approach to definiteness as we find, for instance, in the *Danse Macabre* of Saint-Saëns, or the *Mazeppa* of Liszt. Apart from the scene where Till rides into the market place upsetting the stands, there is only one passage in which the music may be vaguely said to tell the story: the (Lisztian) bars in which the bassoons and the brass battery of tuba, horns, and trombones proclaim Till's death on the scaffold.

"Extremely characteristic," Mauke says quite seriously, "is the seemingly breathless trill of the flute, which depicts the filtering out of the last air from the

man dangling at the rope." If Strauss so intended this, it is certainly funny, though fun at this particular moment seems a little untimely.

Two of the prettiest details in this work are Till's polka-like *Gassenhauer* or street tune, Number XXI in Mauke, and Number IX, "Disguised as Pastor", marked "*volkstümliche Weise*" (after the manner of a folk tune). In reality the first two bars of this melody are almost identical with the folk song "Ich hatt' einen Kameraden." The tuneful simplicity of these two interpolations makes them contrast oddly with the polyphonic intricacies surrounding them; but that is part of Strauss's game.

To avoid ending the merry, prankish piece with the musical shudderings at the gallows, Strauss closed it with a lively epilogue which is interpreted to mean "the apotheosis of immortal humor."

The Viennese critic, Doctor Hanslick, who must have used up a whole barrel of ink in abusing the music of Wagner, Liszt, and all their followers, highly disapproved, it is needless to say, of Strauss's tone poems. In *Till Eulenspiegel* he saw "a whole world's exposition of sound effects and contrasts of moods. The bond of union for these rhapsodic conceits is to be found in the title. . . ." Were it not for this title, if, for instance, it was simply called a scherzo, "the uninformed and plain spoken hearer might perhaps call it frankly a crazy piece. We for our part call it so even with the title. How many pretty witty ideas appear in it! Yet not one of them is not promptly followed by another that jumps on its head to break its neck. It is a mistake to look on this immoderate and masterless chase of pictures as an overflowing of youthful creative power, the dawn of a great new art;

I can see in it only the exact opposite: a product of subtly calculated decadence."

The Viennese critic also found fault with Strauss for using a huge orchestral apparatus (including eight horns, six trumpets, and a multitude of instruments of percussion) which seems more suitable for the expression of "the English war in the Transvaal than as an illustration of episodes in the life of a poor vagabond." There is something in this. On the other hand, read what Herr Mauke says regarding the opportunities for characterization this apparatus put into Strauss's hands:

"Till is perhaps the most complicated musical score in existence. The numerous instruments are used with dazzling ingenuity while preserving carefully their individual tonal character. The wood winds, in particular, are inexhaustible in their bold figures, lightning-like utterances, lightly executed runs and trills. They give to the whole its grotesquely humorous aspect. The reader of the score sometimes sees black from dizziness. And yet, when these criss-crossed and knotted hieroglyphics are converted into tones, everything sounds wonderfully simple, natural, and unforced. On the musical intelligence of the players Strauss makes heavy demands in this score."

In choosing the rondo form for a humorous composition, Strauss followed the example of his predecessors who favored this form for pieces that were intended to display capriciousness, comic exaggerations, and endless alternations of loud and soft, or quick and slow. Usually in a rondo, there is one main theme which is repeated again and again in alternation with other material. In the rondo of Beethoven's violin concerti, the theme of five notes is repeated more than

forty times! In *Till Eulenspiegel* there are two main themes representing its hero, which pervade the whole score in all its changes of mood and situation.

VIII

THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA

Alexander Ritter not only was influential in making Strauss adopt the ideals of Liszt and Wagner; he also interested him in the books of Schopenhauer and in other philosophical literature. When Nietzsche became the fashion, Strauss read him eagerly, and what is generally considered Nietzsche's principal work, "Also Sprach Zarathustra", suggested to him the plan for his fifth tone poem.

In this book, and in other treatises, Nietzsche acted the part of a bull in a china shop in demolishing nearly everything other people held sacred or proper. Religion, morals, art, literature, science, all are assailed in brilliant epigrams. All the Christian virtues are heaved overboard. His ideal, the Superman, tramples under foot everything that gets in the way of the fulfillment of his selfish desires. He knows not pity, which is described as a virtue of the weak. He looks on and uses the weak merely as stepping stones to his own success. These doctrines, it has been maintained, had a good deal to do in bringing on the great European War in 1914. "Might is right" sums up this Nietzschean moral philosophy.

When the German newspapers bruited the report that Strauss had based his latest tone poem on this anarchistic atheistic book of Nietzsche, even his admirers were astonished, if not dismayed, while his

enemies indulged in delirious outbursts of pugnacious enthusiasm. After the first performance in Vienna of this work Doctor Hanslick cited some of Nietzsche's aphorisms: "Man is something that must be overcome. Once ye were apes and even now man is still more of an ape than any ape." "Even concubinage has been corrupted by marriage." "Is this cynicism," asks Hanslick, "a proper ideal for a musician?"

Perhaps this question is not quite fair, for Strauss's tone poem is not concerned with the simian superiority of man to apes or the degradation of concubinage by marriage. When his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was first heard in Berlin in December, 1896, he said: "I did not intend to write philosophical music or portray Nietzsche's great work musically. I meant to convey musically an idea of the development of the human race from its origin, through the various phases of evolution, religious as well as scientific, up to Nietzsche's idea of the superman. The whole symphonic poem is intended as my homage to the genius of Nietzsche, which found its greatest exemplification in his book, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra'."

This book is, according to Nietzsche himself, the most profound treatise ever bestowed on mankind. He does not *prove* this, but he *admits* it. Four years after completing it, he became hopelessly insane. Dryden's

> "Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide,"

if taken literally, never was better exemplified than in Nietzsche. After deifying Wagner, he smothered him in sulphurous fumes of disdain — a change which would have delighted the Brahmsites had he not spoken

of their idol with even more withering contempt. Bizet's *Carmen* now became his ideal. He also composed, and it has been insinuated that the reason why Wagner fell from grace was because he did not hail him as a colleague. When he sent one of his compositions, *Symphonic Meditation on Manfred*, to Bülow, in 1872, that unceremonious pianist promptly wrote to him that he had found it "the very acme of fanatical nonsense, and the most disagreeable and anti-musical thing that my eyes have ever seen committed to music paper."

That Nietzsche's famous — and notorious — book contains not only anarchistic aphorisms but poetic thoughts capable of touching a musician's imagination, is shown by the following excerpt, which is printed on a flyleaf of Strauss's core:

Having attained the age of thirty, Zarathustra (who, by the way, is not the Persian prophet but Nietzsche himself) "left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. There he rejoiced in his spirit and his loneliness, and for ten years did not grow weary of it. But at last his heart turned; one morning he got up with the dawn, stepped into the presence of the Sun and thus spake unto him: 'Thou great star! What would be thy happiness, were it not for those for whom thou shinest? For ten years thou hast come up here to my cave. Thou wouldst have got sick of thy light and thy journey but for me, mine eagle, and my serpent. But we waited for thee every morning, and receiving from thine abundance, blessed thee for it. Lo! I am weary of my wisdom, like the bee that hath collected too much honey; I need hands reaching out for it. I would fain grant and distribute until the wise among men could once more enjoy their folly, and the poor once more their riches. For that end I must descend to the depth; as thou dost at even when, sinking behind the sea, thou givest light to the lower regions, thou resplendent star! I must, like thee, go down, as men say — men to whom I would descend. Then bless me, thou impassive

eye, thou canst look without envy even upon over-much happiness. Bless the cup which is about to overflow, so that the water golden-flowing out of it may carry everywhere the reflection of thy rapture. Lo! this cup is about to empty itself again, and Zarathustra will once more become a man.' Thus Zarathustra's going down began."

This excerpt from Nietzsche's preface is not intended to be taken as the program of Strauss's tone poem. The full title of the composition is: *Thus Spake Zarathustra, tone poem, free after Nietzsche.* The word "free" indicates that the composer did not intend to follow the book too closely; yet he chose for the divisions of the musical score captions borrowed from the book. They are:

I. Of the Dwellers in the Rear World.
II. Of the Great Yearning.
III. Of Joys and Passions.
IV. Grave Song.
V. Of Science.
VI. The Convalescent.
VII. The Song of the Dance.
VIII. Night Song.

The first thought likely to occur to the reader at sight of these headings is that Strauss at last had ceased his coy struggles to keep the poetic contents of his poems to himself until wrung from his reticent soul by persistent friends, interviewers, and commentators. Casting aside what he felt to be the better way of Liszt, he henceforth adopted the perplexing and unsatisfactory Berliozian way of presenting a detailed program which the hearer is expected to fit to the music as well as he can. Usually he can't.

The next thought likely to occur is that Strauss's *Zarathustra* program refutes the charge that he at-

tempted the impossible task of setting to music a philosophical treatise. With two exceptions, the eight headings in his score, instead of being revolutionary, are ludicrously conventional. Great yearnings, grave-songs, passions and joys, including the joy of convalescence, dance, and night songs — are they not the stock-in-trade of all composers?

The two exceptions referred to are Number I: "Of the Dwellers in the Rear World", and Number V "Of Science." Let us consider them, together with the other numbers, in proper order.

I. Concerning the "Dwellers in the Rear World": Can they be definitely depicted in music, and why should they be so depicted? Who are they, anyhow? They are those deluded persons who, in Nietzsche's philosophy, vainly sought in asceticism and religion a solution of the mystery of life. "Ah, ye brothers," says Zarathustra, "this God, whom I created, was the work of a man and — an insanity, like all gods." The sounds of the Gregorian *Credo* and *Magnificat* are introduced for liturgical color. It is on record that when this tone poem was performed in Cologne, the heading concerning the Dwellers in the Rear World was discreetly changed to "Of the Divine." That inverted the meaning, but probably nobody knew the difference.

II. Before the *Magnificat* and *Credo* are intoned, the orchestra introduces the motive of the "Great Yearning": "Sing with boisterous song, till all seas grow still, that they may listen to thy yearning."

III. "Animated, Very Expressive" are the directions for the theme "Of Joys and Passions." "The tempo grows more vivacious, the passion grows hotter. . . . But here, too, there is no satisfaction, rest is nowhere. So away with it."

IV. "Three trombones in unison shrilly intone a very characteristic motive that sounds like a 'curse upon Patience'." This is W. F. Apthorp's interpretation. To Arthur Hahn these tones hurled out by the trombones are "the expression of violent disgust, with which man now turns his back on the passions."

V. In this section, "Von der Wissenschaft", Strauss is confronted by the problem of expressing in music a problem of science. He does it by providing a fugue theme — the fugue is the most scientific form of music, isn't it? — a fugue theme, which includes all the diatonic and chromatic degrees of the scale. The elaboration of this fugue, with the Nature theme and motive of yearning, Arthur Hahn informs readers of his elaborate guide, is intended to depict "the eager endeavor to unveil the most secret relations between man and nature, and thus get on the track of the world riddle. But in vain are all attempts to lift the veil."

VI. "The Convalescent." After acting and crying out like a madman, Zarathustra falls down like one dead. After seven days he rises on his couch, smells a rose apple, and finds its odor sweet. Then his animals think the time has come for addressing him: "Speak not further, thou convalescent one! — but go out where the world waiteth for thee like a garden. Go out unto the roses and bees and flocks of doves! But especially unto the singing birds, that thou mayest learn *singing* from them. For singing is good for the convalescent; the healthy one may speak." The music in which Strauss depicts the convalescence from all unfulfilled yearnings is another "contrapuntal masterpiece." Counterpoint is Strauss's *forte*, and he usually applies it *fortissimo*.

VII. The "Dance" is announced "by a gigantic soaring up in the strings in unison." Why a dance? Because "one night Zarathustra went through the forest with his disciples, and when seeking for a well, behold! he came unto a green meadow which was surrounded by trees and bushes. There girls danced together. As soon as the girls knew Zarathustra, they ceased to dance; but Zarathustra approached them with a friendly gesture and spake these words: 'Cease not to dance, ye sweet girls! . . . I am the advocate of God in the presence of the devil. But he is the spirit of gravity. How could I, ye light ones, be an enemy unto Divine dances? or unto the feet of girls with beautiful ankles?'" Gradually all the leading motives of the piece are drawn into the vortex of the dance — a dance which, as George P. Upton remarks, "is anything but terpsichorean in character. 'To the general' it must be 'caviar'." The mood now becomes calmer, and we reach the last section:

VIII. "Night song." "It is night: now only do all songs of lovers awake. And my soul, too, is a lover's song. An unsilenced, not-to-be-silenced something is in me, which would fain become vocal. A greed of love is in me, which itself speaks the language of love. I am Light! Ah, would that I were Night!" An energetic climax follows; then after a lull, "the mad dance bursts forth in indomitable vigor", as H. Reimann remarks, "till a *fff* stroke of the bell darkens the Dianysial mood." The following period is marked "Song of the Night-Wanderer" or "Drunken Song" in Nietzsche's later editions. On the strokes of the "heavy, heavy, humming bell (*Brummiglocke*)" Nietzsche wrote the following lines ("Zarathustra's Roundelay"):

One!
O man, take heed!
Two!
What saith the deep midnight?
Three!
"I have slept, I have slept! —
Four!
From deep dream I woke to light.
Five!
The world is deep.
Six!
And deeper than the day thought for.
Seven!
Deep is its woe, —
Eight!
And deeper still than woe — delight!
Nine!
Saith woe: 'Vanish!'
Ten!
Yet all joy wants eternity.
Eleven!
Wants deep, deep eternity!"
Twelve!

The twelve strokes of the bell are heard in the music, growing weaker and weaker, as if dying away in the distance.

Much ink was spilt, after the first performance of *Zarathustra*, over its closing measures. Doctor Hanslick resorted to sarcasm: "The violins and wind instruments in a high position hold on to the chord of B major, while far below the double-basses softly pluck C G C. This simultaneous sounding of the keys of B major and C major is intended, according to the official analyzers, to signify 'the unsolved world-riddle.' 'What a trivial idea to be so witty!' I say with the critic in Harden's *Future*."

Doctor Hanslick pays his compliments in similar

fashion to other sections of this work. "Science" is "represented by a rhythmically lame, ill-sounding, repulsive fugue in five parts." "Convalescence" has for its token "a comic kikeriki, twice intoned by the trumpet." The "Dance" is "a wretched valse which flutters about the leading motive C G C in all forms and colors." The "Dance Song" is preceded by "a long and truly hideous howling." Strauss, this critic conjectures, gave his score the title it has in order to give it a significance which itself it lacks. As a whole, *Zarathustra* is "extremely weak and tortured in the matter of musical invention." It is an "orgy of sounds" (*klingender Farbenrausch*), which, with the display of technical cleverness "served the composer less as a means than as the chief end in view."

A no less eminent critic, Doctor Richard Batka, on the other hand, finds *Zarathustra* a work of monumental grandeur containing passages of irresistible, superb beauty; a work which shows us what Strauss can achieve in the realm of the sublime: "Strauss was much censured for combining the keys B major and C major at the close. But this 'harassing' combination is only seemingly offensive. When the violins, in the highest position, let the B major chord die away and the double basses sound a C after it, pizzicato, the very great distance between the sounds in itself mitigates the sense of a harmonic monstrosity and simply leaves an impression of a vague dissonance, a mild feeling of dissatisfaction, which is precisely what the composer wished to express in this place. Strauss's opponents like to harp on details like this one; but a sense of justice should have compelled them to dwell also on such passages as those of the Joys and Passions, wherein the heart's happiness and salvation

have found such impressive human expression. And this is what makes Strauss preëminently the composer of our time — his giving expression to feelings which move all of us, with the special accents of our period. Therefore those may not be in the wrong who see in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* the first composition filled with the modern spirit, a milestone in modern musical history."

A millstone would perhaps come as near the truth; for what is there in the Strauss-Nietzsche *Zarathustra* that is specifically modern? Joys and Passions, the Grave, Dance, and Night Songs are subjects for music as old as the hills, and while Strauss's musical specialty — gorgeous coloring — is a modern characteristic, his achievements do not go beyond Wagner's. One might say that the extreme complexity of modern life is mirrored in his intricate scores, but that would be far-fetched. The contrapuntists of The Netherlands indulged in the same excessive complexity as long ago as the sixteenth century. They are now forgotten.

There is one part of *Zarathustra* which, I admit, is not only beautiful but sublime. It is the stupendous climax at the beginning, where the full Straussian orchestra unites with the majestic tones of the organ to paint the glories of sunrise. Nature in all its splendor is revealed in tonal combinations of thrilling opulence. The man who could pen that is a genius. To be sure, Boïto wrote something similar in the Prologue in Heaven of his *Mefistofele;* but Strauss improved on Boïto, as he did on Gluck in his revision of *Iphigenia in Tauris.*

Probably Otto Floersheim had this scene in mind when he wrote rapturously that *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

is "the greatest score penned by man." Quoting him, James Huneker adds in a paragraph orchestrated *à la* Strauss: "It is a cathedral in architectonic and is dangerously sublime, dangerously silly, with grotesque gargoyles, hideous flying abutments, exquisite traceries, fantastic arches half gothic, half infernal, huge and resounding spaces, gorgeous façades and heaven-splitting spires. A mighty structure, and no more to be understood at one, two, or a dozen visits than the Kölner Dom. It should be played once every season, and the audience be limited to poets, musicians, and madmen."

Strauss closes this tone poem with a dissonance. Let us follow his example in these comments. *Zarathustra* has not proved a lasting success. Ernest Newman predicted, because of defects he enumerates, that it would "age more rapidly than any other orchestral work of Strauss"; and now Max Steinitzer refers to "the scarcity of its performances."

IX

DON QUIXOTE

Dr. Richard Batka, who, in a passage just quoted, waxes so enthusiastic over *Zarathustra*, disposes of its successor in this summary fashion: "The attempt to illustrate the adventures of Don Quixote in a cycle of orchestral variations resulted in only a partial success. It turned out to be more of an intellectual gambol, an exhibit of drollery which leaves us inwardly cold and lacks the brevity which is the soul of art. All that the musical world remembers is a couple of astonishing examples of tone painting; some exquisite

details (Dulcinea!) have already fallen with the absurd whole into practical oblivion."

The complete title of this poem is *Don Quixote (Introduzione, Tema con Variazione, e Finale): Fantastische Variationen über ein Thema ritterlichen Characters.* In English: (Introduction, Theme with Variations, and Finale): Fantastic Variations on a Theme of a Knightly Character. It was composed at Munich in 1897, and had its first performance on March 8, 1898, at Cologne under Franz Wüllner. The dedication is to Joseph Dupont, the Belgian conductor.

The orchestral score of *Don Quixote* appeared without any "program" except the title; but the version for piano contains some clues. The following indications were provided by Strauss himself:

Don Quixote loses his reason from reading books of knighthood and decides to become a roving knight himself.

Theme: Don Quixote, Knight of the Sorrowful Aspect (Solo violoncello). Sancho Panza (bass clarinet, tenor tuba, and solo viola).

1. Variation: The strange pair set out on their journey under the sign of the beautiful Dulcinea of Toboso. Adventure with the windmills.

2. Variation: Victorious battle with the Host of the great Emperor Alifanfaron (a herd of sheep).

3. Variation: Dialogue of Knight and Squire. Demands, questions, and proverbs of Sancho; instructions, appeasings, and promises by Don Quixote.

4. Variation: Unfortunate adventure with a procession of penitents.

5. Variation: Don Quixote's vigil by his armor. Outpourings of his heart to the distant Dulcinea.

6. Variation: The meeting with the peasant girl,

whom Sancho deludes his master into accepting as the enchanted Dulcinea.

7. Variation: Ride through the air.

8. Variation: Unfortunate adventure on the enchanted boat (barcarole).

9. Variation: Fight with the supposed magicians, two monks on their donkeys.

10. Variation: Duel with the Knight of the White Moon. Don Quixote, felled, says farewell to his weapons, and returns to his home, resolved to be a shepherd.

Finale: Having recovered his reason, he ends his days in contemplation. Death of Don Quixote.

Mark Twain defined a classic as being a book which everybody praises and nobody reads. The famous story of Cervantes is one which all know about but few know by actual perusal. For the sake of those who have not read it, but who wish to know more definitely what Strauss tried to portray in his music, a few more details may be added here to fill out gaps in Strauss's brief cues, and throw light on his musical tricks.

Much reading of romances about knights-errant who slay monsters and rescue fair maidens has made the worthy Don Quixote mad and he resolves to become a roving knight himself. His imagination conjures up visions of giants, dames, and adventures diverse.

To indicate that they are visions the instruments are muted.[1]

The grotesque Don Quixote motive, always sounded by solo violoncello, is easily followed. It is indicative,

[1] Herwarth Walden points out in his elaborate analysis of this score (which was inspired by Strauss himself) that in this passage for the first time a muted tuba is heard.

at the same time, of the general idea of knight-errantry. A shrill discord portrays the oncoming madness. The Sancho Panza theme is characteristic of that coarse and clumsy but wily peasant's character.

Sounded at its first entry by bass clarinet and tenor tuba, it is afterwards always assigned to the solo viola, a device which helps to make it (like the Don theme) easily recognized at its many recurrences in the score. To these a number of other themes and themelets are added gradually (Walden's analysis contains fifty-three) and with the varied combinations and interweaving of these, Strauss constructed one of his most complex and ingenious scores.

With a helmet made of pasteboard, and a knacker named Rosinante to ride on, the knight sets out with his squire. Soon they come in sight of a number of windmills. The crazy knight, taking them for huge giants, charges, transfixes one of the wings, is lifted with his horse into the air, and hurled to the ground. To indicate this catastrophe musically, the composer resorts to a run in the wood-wind, a harp glissando, and heavy drum beats.

Having got under way again, they soon see a cloud of dust — surely an approaching army! Sancho sees that it's only a flock of sheep, but Don Quixote charges and puts the "army" to rout. The bleating of the terrified sheep is imitated by the use of muted brasses.

Don Quixote had promised Sancho the governorship of an island (to be conquered) if he would accompany him faithfully. In the third Variation, Sancho begins to have his doubts of the results and rewards of their journey and gets into a dispute with his master, who, after vain appeals to his sense of honor, gets angry and commands him to hold his tongue.

A churchly theme announces the approach of a band of pilgrims carrying the image of a woman. In the crazy knight's imagination, they are bold robbers kidnapping a noble lady. He charges, but the pilgrims — peasants of the neighborhood — fail to see the joke, and one of the image bearers fells the crazy knight with his club. With a wail Sancho throws himself on what he thinks is his master's corpse; but Don Quixote soon recovers, and the journey is resumed.

Following the knightly custom that he has read about, Don Quixote scorns sleep and holds watch by his armor. Again he has visions of the adored Dulcinea, for whose presence his longing increases. Soft breezes are blowing, and the orchestra revels in luscious sounds. It is, in the words of Steinitzer, "a brief passage intoxicating in its color effects."

Don Quixote sends Sancho Tobo ahead to find Dulcinea, while he waits for her return; but the wily squire, doubting the existence of such a person, brings to him an ugly country wench, who happens to come along on a burro. The knight cannot believe this is his ideal, but finally makes up his mind that she has been changed for the worse by evil magic.

"Ride through the air" is Strauss's brief clue to the Seventh Variation. It refers to a practical joke played by some noble dames who put the Don and Sancho blindfolded on a wooden horse, which is to transport them through the air thousands of miles to a place where a giant will meet them in combat. The whistling of the wind about them is indicated in the orchestral score by chromatic flute passages, harp and drum roll, in addition to a special wind-machine, while the men really believe they are being transported through the air. "The persistent tremolo of the double

basses on one note may be taken to mean that the two did not really leave the solid earth." So, at any rate, the official analyzer, Herr Walden, interprets it; and he thinks it one of Strauss's cleverest contributions to program music.

Arriving at the banks of the Ebro River, they see an empty bark tied to a tree and rudderless. The Don had read about such a thing in the romances. Surely this boat had been sent by a knight who needed aid, and it would carry them swiftly to him. It did carry them swiftly — but right into the vortex of a mill stream, in which they would have been drowned had not some of the millers fished them out with poles. The orchestra paints the turbulent waters with waving passages in the cellos, basses, and woodwinds.

To the churchly sounds of two bassoons, a pair of monks come along, thinking of no harm, when the Don Quixote motive is suddenly sounded, and the knight charges, under the impression that they are magicians.

The tenth and last Variation is concerned with the action of a friend of Don Quixote, the Knight of the White Moon, who undertakes to cure his madness. The two engage in a duel, with the understanding that if the Don is vanquished, he is to give up roving and return to his home. He is vanquished, keeps his promise, and in the peaceful life he now leads he soon recovers his reason, seeing life again as it is, and not as painted in the romances.

In the Finale, "tremolos in the strings indicate the first shiver of a deadly fever." The Don recalls his adventures. He has been deceived, and he is now ready to die.

While Doctor Batka, quoted at the beginning of this section, does not regret the "practical oblivion" into which this tone poem has fallen, Steinitzer declares that this "musico-poetically infinitely charming work is heard far too seldom."

Ernest Newman finds that "the blend of humor and pathos in *Don Quixote* is something wholly new in music." He could do well without such things as the extraordinary imitation of the bleating of the flock of sheep. On the purely formal side the score is "perfectly masterly." In it "the modern variation form may be said to have received its apotheosis"; and "the method inaugurated by Wagner of denoting a character by a theme, and expressing the changes in the character by variations of the theme, is here carried to its furthest possibilities: every psychological change in *Don Quixote* is expressed with infallible certainty in a variation of the original theme."

Another eminent English critic, Edward Algernon Baughan, admires the "humorous onomatopœia" in these variations, and considers this "the one work of Richard Strauss which does partly justify itself." "The need of following a definite program helps him to shape his music, and gives him new forms and suggests new devices which he could not find in absolute music itself."

This is all right — but how about the hearer? Can he possibly be expected to follow the story as musically told in the variations? Or is it not likely to spoil his pleasure to have to make a great effort prolonged during thirty-five minutes, to apply the programmatic cues at the right moments? Let us hear what the eminent French author, Romain Rolland, an admirer of Strauss, has to say on this point:

"This symphonic work marks, in my opinion, the extreme point program music can reach. In none of his other works does Strauss give more proof of intelligence, cleverness, and prodigious craftsmanship; nor is there another, I add in all sincerity, in which there is such a sheer waste of energy for the sake of a prank, a musical pleasantry, which lasts forty-five [thirty-five] minutes, and subjects the composer, the players, and the audience to a painful effort." Technically, he adds, this score indicates progress; but otherwise it is a step backward.

X

A HERO'S LIFE

Compared with Richard Wagner, who, as I pointed out in "Wagner and his Works", was forty-four years old, and had written all but three of his works before a single one of his operas was produced at Vienna, Munich, or Stuttgart, and fifty-six and over before Italy, France, and England began even with his early operas — compared with Richard Wagner, I say, Richard Strauss was a pampered child of fortune. In the pages devoted to the story of his life we saw how promptly nearly every one of his symphonic poems and operas was performed, not only in German cities but all over the world; and how his fame and prosperity grew like an avalanche. Surely if ever a composer was fortunate, Richard Strauss was the man.

He was fond of country life; why did he not lie on the lawn all day long and just enjoy life? Alas, he could not, for the grass was infested with snakes — venomous creatures that got busy poisoning every

one of his sensational successes. Some of the snakes were regular boa constrictors, big fellows who crushed all his new productions in their cruel coils.

Max Steinitzer devotes a special section to Strauss's enemies among the critical fraternity, naming such writers as August Spanuth, Hanslick, Adolph Weissmann, Thomas San-Galli, Karl Grunsky, Edgar Istel, Rudolf Louis, Friedrich Spiro, Friedrich Brandes, Georg Göhler, Hugo Riemann, Arthur Smolian, Max Kalbeck, Georg Graner; a list to which he might have added an equal number of eminent foreign adversaries.

The vicious remarks of these prominent critics gradually got on Strauss's nerves. It has been assumed that Wagner had in mind his pet enemy, Hanslick, when he created the part of the odious Beckmesser in his *Die Meistersinger;* why should not Strauss improve on him by writing a work in which he could get even with all his adversaries at one stroke?

Such a work actually was penned by him in the year 1898. Begun in Munich on August 8, it was finished on December 27, in Berlin. It is dedicated to the eminent Dutch conductor, Willem Mengelberg, who made a specialty of interpreting the works of Strauss and Brahms; and its first performance was at Frankfurt, March 3, 1899, from the manuscript, Strauss himself conducting. At its third performance, under Wüllner, in Cologne, a large number of the hearers hissed the new score, and Steinitzer relates that as late as 1914, whenever *Ein Heldenleben* was played in Berlin, many left the hall when the orchestra began to play the hideous music which Strauss hurls at the heads of his critical adversaries.

While some of the commentators (including Wilhelm Klatte, who contributes an elaborate analysis

to Schlesinger's "Meisterführer Number 6") discreetly veil the fact that *Ein Heldenleben* is a portrait, Strauss's intimate friend and biographer, Max Steinitzer, frankly states that the hero of this tone poem is the creator of it. Strauss, indeed, indicated this himself in unmistakable fashion by citing in one section themes from his most important works. And why should he not celebrate himself — admittedly the most talked-about composer of his time — as a hero? Did not Goethe say *Nur der Lump ist bescheiden* (Only a good-for-nothing is modest)? Strauss, says James Huneker, "but follows in the footsteps of Walt Whitman and of his own contemporaries — Rodin, the sculptor; Gabriele d'Annunzio in *Il Fuoco;* Nietzsche in *Zarathustra;* Tolstoy in all his confessions — despite their inverted humility; Wagner in *Meistersinger;* Franz Stuck, the Munich painter, whose portrait of his own eccentric self is not the least of his work."

All the details of the "program", moreover, fit into the theory that we have here a musical autobiography, comparable, in a way, to the biography of Siegfried in the *Götterdämmerung* funeral music.

As usual, Strauss was reluctant to betray the "program" which had helped him to shape this tone poem after the recipe of Liszt. To Romain Rolland he said: "There is no need of a program. It is enough to know there is a hero fighting his enemies." But Friedrich Roesch's analysis (Leipzig: Leuckhart) includes a poem by Eberhard König which "follows the composer's indications and explanations."

In the fewest possible words, the program of *Heldenleben,* which is in six sections, is as follows:

(1) The Hero; (2) The Hero's Adversaries; (3) The Hero's Helpmate; (4) The Hero's Battlefield; (5) The

Hero's Works of Peace; (6) The Hero's Escape from the World and the Completion.

The Hero. In the first section the orchestra endeavors to portray the hero's character in its various aspects. It is a noble character, proud and emotional, but with an iron will, and free from sullen obstinacy. "This section closes with pomp and brilliance, with the motive thundered out by the brass; and it is the most symphonic section of the tone poem."

The Hero's Adversaries. They are men who not only fall short of greatness but cannot even comprehend it. "Sneering and carping are all they are capable of." They suspect the hero's sincerity. "Fifths in the tubas show their earthly sluggish nature." The hero is amazed, indignant. "Stupidly flippant little themes on the wood-wind indicate the antagonists."

The Hero's Helpmate. "The solo violin represents the loved one, who at first is coy, coquettish, and disdains his humble suit. At last she rewards him." Of this section, and the following, Mr. Baughan has given the most vivid description: "The influence of woman comes into his life. At first it seems almost as bad as the cunning onslaught of his antagonists. A long-winded violin solo tells us that the hero can as little understand this new influence as his opponents understand him. The solo is for a long time an empty capricco, full of meaningless twists and turns, and maddening in its reiteration. The hero holds aloof; he does not understand; but gradually the music grows warmer and more passionate, although the violin solo still holds its incomprehensible way. At last the oboe sings, a phrase — a love-phrase of infinite beauty and tenderness, and the violin, repeating it, responds. The hero has called to and has found

THE HERO AND HIS ADVERSARIES
Caricature by John Jack Vriesländer

CARICATURE OF STRAUSS BY EDWARD GRÜTZNER

his mate. Beautiful is the love music that follows — it is among the most beautiful music that has ever been given to the world." Chiefly because of it, Joseph Stransky considers this the finest of Strauss's tone poems.

The Hero's Battlefield. "But what are those shrill discordant trumpet calls that break in on his dream? The call to action; the organized onslaught of the hero's antagonists. He girds himself for battle, inspired with new strength by the love for his companion. And what a musical battle it is! Technically it is the development section of the work. Themes which we have already heard are hurled against each other; a new hero's theme makes itself heard against the din of the warfare; dissonances which should turn the hair of old-fashioned theorists grey assault the ears; and over all the maddening rhythms of the drum." "Such an exposition," exclaims James Huneker, "has never been heard since Saurians roared in the steaming marshes of the young planet, or when prehistoric man met in multitudinous and shrieking combat. Yet the web is polyphonically spun — spun magnificently. This battle scene is full of unmitigated horror."

The Hero's Works of Peace. The battle is over; but the world still has doubts of the victorious hero's genius. So he refreshes its memory by recalling the great things he has done; we hear themes from *Don Juan*, *Macbeth*, *Zarathustra*, *Death and Transfiguration*, *Don Quixote*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, the music-drama *Guntram*, the song, *Traum durch die Dämmerung*. Jean Marnold has traced twenty-three of these reminiscences introduced here; "and the hearer who has not been warned cannot at the time notice the slightest disturbance in the development."

The Hero's Escape from the World and the Completion. "The world is still cold. At first the hero rages, but resignation and content soon takes possession of his soul. The bluster of nature reminds him of his old days of war. Again he sees the beloved one, and in peace and contemplation his soul takes flight. For the last time the hero's theme is heard as it rises to a sonorous, impressive climax. And then is solemn music, such as might serve funeral rites", "with flags and laurel wreaths lowered on a hero's grave."

At the first performance of *Heldenleben* in Germany, Romain Rolland saw "persons listening to it tremble, get up abruptly, unconsciously make violent gestures. I myself felt the strange intoxication, the dizziness from this turbulent ocean of sound, and I thought that for the first time in thirty years the Germans had found the poet of Victory."

Ernest Newman declares that while "in the fine sense of form that controls the vast design", *Heldenleben* "stands at the head of all symphonic poems we know", the section of the adversaries, though it has "a certain humor of an essentially poor kind", is "merely a piece of laborious stupidity" which spoils "a great masterwork" for the sake of flinging back at the critics "some of their own mud." But was it "mud"?

My own objection to *Heldenleben* has always been that its technical cleverness is so much more in evidence than melodic inspiration. The cacophonies of the adversaries are certainly overdone, but they have at any rate a programmatic excuse. The chief objection to them is that they encouraged Arnold Schönberg and many other followers of Strauss in making harsh dissonances an end in themselves, applicable at all

times, including situations in which Strauss himself would have used honeyed strains. By his *Heldenleben* exaggerations he thus became "epoch-making" in a very regrettable direction.

XI

SINFONIA DOMESTICA

Five years after the *Heldenleben*, and separated from it by a number of songs as well as the opera *Feuersnot*, Strauss gave to the world another tone poem, *Sinfonia Domestica*, which again caused the critics of two continents to spill gallons of ink. Its first performance anywhere was given in New York on March 21, 1904, under the composer's own direction. It was the grand climax of a special festival concerning which more will be said in the section on Strauss in America. Concerning the novelty I wrote in the *Evening Post:*

Europeans usually pay little or no attention to what is going on in our musical world. But on December 25, 1903, all European music lovers were eagerly awaiting cabled news from New York regarding the first performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* ever given outside of Bayreuth; and to-day, once more, the newspapers of Germany and England, at any rate, will have paragraphs regarding a musical event that has occurred in New York — the first performance, not only in America, but everywhere, of Richard Strauss's latest tone poem, entitled *Domestic Symphony* — a work to which the composer devoted thirteen months, from May, 1902, to June, 1903.

Richard Strauss is, at present, the most talked about writer of music, and in the minds of most people — poor, innocent souls — this is tantamount to his being the greatest living composer. Why, therefore, should not a product of his pen be treated as an event of sensational interest?

Last night's audience did treat it as such. Many music lovers were present, and the composer had all the applause he could have desired, not only after his new work, but after the *Don Juan*, which preceded it, and the *Zarathustra*, which followed it; the *Don Juan* being a composition peculiarly barren of musical content, while the *Zarathustra* begins interestingly *à la Rheingold* prelude, continues *à la* prologue to Boito's *Mefistofele* and at the end evaporates in Richard Straussism, like a Western rivulet losing itself in sands of the Mojave desert.

When Richard Strauss was asked to furnish a synopsis of *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, he merely indicated some of the motives, leaving all the rest to his hearers — and journalists. It was a capital way of calling attention to his work. The critics forthwith set to work and spilled gallons of ink in conjectures as to what the composer might have had in mind, and the whole musical world was soon talking about *Till;* indeed, the commentators are still quarreling as to whether Strauss's music allows Till to die on the gallows or escape, even as, in the days when there were no musical journalists, the theologians used to discuss the question as to how many angels could dance on the point of a needle.

The same business-like tactics have been pursued in regard to the new work. Dr. Strauss's full title for it is "*Symphonia Domestica*, dedicated to my dear wife and our boy, opus 53." There is also a sub-title "In one movement and three sub-divisions (a) introduction and Scherzo; (b) Adagio; (c) double fugue and finale." For the present, at any rate, the composer wishes this title to be the only official indication of his programmic intentions, because, as he avers, he wants his work to be judged as music, pure and simple; semi-officially, however, he has still further piqued curiosity, and incidentally, furnished matter for "copy" and conversation by letting the cat's tail, at any rate, peep out of the bag. The *Symphonia* we are told, represents a day in a composer's life, and it has three leading themes, representing Papa, Mama, and Baby. The Baby's theme is the most original and at the same time the most noisy of the set. The score contains a place in which the aunts are supposed to compare the child to his father and mother. In private con-

versation the composer is said to have confessed that other passages represent him at his work, or standing on the balcony in his shirt sleeves, while others again depict the baby in his bath, or waking up at seven. What fine material for gossip, and for making the piece widely known!

Dr. Strauss is certainly a most original man — the one composer of our time who, as his admirers inform us, has something new and grand to tell us. No musician has ever before thought of writing a "domestic" symphony. Richard Wagner, to be sure, once perpetrated a charming piece of family music and called it the *Siegfried Idyl*. It was played as a pleasant surprise for his wife on her birthday and was composed in honor of their son. But Richard Wagner was a mere bungler in this matter. Fancy his scoring this domestic piece for only a few strings, one oboe, one flute, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, and a trumpet which has only thirteen bars! Richard Strauss scorns such Liliputianism. To honor his boy and describe a day in *his* life he needs an orchestra of one hundred and eight instruments, including all the usual color and noise makers, beside the obsolete oboe d'amore and four saxophones, which, because of their noisiness, have heretofore been confined chiefly to military bands. It is extremely foolish to ask: "If a man needs so big a band to depict a day in his humdrum life, what would he do if he were to illustrate a tragedy, or a catastrophe — a death, a ghost scene, an earthquake?" What's the matter with an orchestra of a thousand in such a case? Can't you see that this is the way to be "original" when you have nothing new to say — no melodic ideas, no stirring modulations? In the whole of the *Domestic Symphony* there is only one particularly individual melody, the one which represents the baby; and even that is rather commonplace. It is developed and orchestrated with much skill, and towards the end it is built up into a climax which suggests a megalosaurian monster rather than a Bavarian baby. As Music, that climax is splendid; as program music, it is ridiculous.

The champions of Strauss tell us that he is not only the pupil of Liszt, but his superior, on Liszt's own lines. Now it was a cardinal maxim of Liszt, the inventor of the

symphonic poem, that "a program or a title is justified only when it is a poetic necessity, an inseparable part of the complete work and indispensable for its understanding." Is that the case with the *Domestic Symphony?* If ten million persons should hear it, would a single one guess its title or subject? Or, having heard the title, would anyone ever be able to guess a single detail regarding the doings of Papa, Mama, or the Baby? How different Liszt's *Mazeppa* or Saint-Saëns's *Phaeton!* So far as there is any relation between music and "poetic" subject, the *Domestic Symphony* might be called quite as appropriately "A Trip to Constantinople" or "A Day at Vladivostok." With such knowledge of his intentions as the composer has made public, it seems possible to "spot" certain domestic scenes like the discharge of an obstreperous cook, or the Buster Brown tricks of the boy; but that is about all.

The whole thing is either a deplorable aberration of taste or else a clever method of courting publicity and making talk. But it must be understood, at the same time, that there is a great deal of exaggeration in all this talk about Dr. Strauss's mastery of the technique of composing and orchestrating. Up to the present time all of the great men in music have labored to make each instrument speak its own idiom. Mozart, Schubert, Wagner, Liszt, Dvořák secure their ravishing colors by doing this. Strauss does the opposite, trying to make the trombone play as if it were a piccolo, and thus topsy-turvying everything. In an Offenbach operetta such things are appropriate, but not in a concert piece which has a program that cannot be followed. It is no great art to produce new orchestral effects by the Strauss procedure.

If this criticism had appeared before the section devoted to the "adversaries" in *Heldenleben* had been written, the composer might have introduced an additional note of his "cacophone" in my honor. I frankly admit that I erred in two directions. I should not now belittle Strauss's comparative craftsmanship, for in his contrapuntal mastery he certainly represents

a culminating point. I have changed my mind, also, regarding Strauss's behavior in regard to programs. After studying his acts with the care that only a biographer is likely to bestow on them, I have concluded that his attitude of coyness, and his habit of revealing his "programs" only gradually, were not due to a desire to keep his name in the newspapers, but were a result of his wish to preserve a Lisztian reserve in regard to the "plots" (pictorial or psychic) of his works; which wish was always frustrated by the eagerness of the commentators and analyzers to have something to write about. It is so much easier and so much more interesting to write about a program story than about music itself! This book is much more interesting because of the Strauss programs than it would be without them. And Strauss would never have been as famous as he is had he succeeded in withholding his detailed programs.

That he nevertheless tried hard to do this is one of the Strauss paradoxes. His sincerity in regard to the *Domestica* is indicated by his remarks to Richard Aldrich printed in the *New York Times* of March 6, 1904:

He wishes it to be taken as music, for what it is, and not as the elaboration of the specific details of a scheme of things. The symphony, he declares, is sufficiently explained by its title, and is to be listened to as the symphonic development of its themes. It is of interest to quote the title, as he wishes it to stand. It is "*Symphonia Domestica*, (meiner lieben Frau und unserm Jungen gewidmet, op. 53), which is, interpreted, *Domestic Symphony*, dedicated to my dear wife and our Boy, op. 53." It bears the descriptive subtitle, "In einem Satze und drei Unterabteilungen: (*a*) Einleitung und Scherzo; (*b*) Adagio; (*c*) Doppelfuge und Finale." (In one movement and three subdivisions: (*a*) Introduction and Scherzo; (*b*) Adagio; (*c*) Double Fugue and Finale.) It is highly significant that the composer

desires these movements to be listened to as the three movements of a composition, substantially, as he declares, in the old symphonic form. He believes, and has expressed his belief, that the anxious search of the public for the exactly corresponding passages in the music and the program, the guessing as to the significance of this or that, the distraction of following a train of thought exterior to the music, are destructive to the musical enjoyment. Hence he has forbidden the publication of any description of what he has sought to express till after the concert. "This time," says Dr. Strauss, "I wish my music to be listened to purely as music."

Philip Hale, in the program books of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has devoted several pages to tracing the gradual evolution (for publicity) of the *Domestica* program. At Frankfurt, the first German city to hear it (June 1, 1904), again under Strauss's baton, it was possible to use a program note published in advance in "Die Musik." In this note reference is made, among other things, to the Husband's theme being "easy going", with a "continuation that is meditative", and a melody that rises "in a fiery manner" on high. The second theme, "The Wife", is extremely capricious. The third theme, "The Child", is very simple and in Haydn's manner. It is to be played by an oboe d'amore. Among the one hundred and eight instruments must be four saxophones. "Richard Strauss refuses to give any further program."

In Berlin, on December 12 of the same year, with Strauss again as conductor, there was, in place of the usual minute analyses of the works played, only the following note for the *Domestica:*

This work, written in one movement, is divided into four subdivisions, which correspond, on the whole, to the old form of the sonata.

I. Introduction and development of the three chief groups of themes.
   The husband's themes:
      (a) Easy-going, (b) Dreamy, (c) Fiery.
   The wife's themes:
      (a) Lively and gay, (b) Grazioso.
   The child's theme:
      Tranquil.
II. Scherzo.
   Parent's happiness. Childish play.
   Cradle song (the clock strikes seven in the evening).
III. Adagio.
   Doing and thinking. Love scene.
   Dreams and cares (the clock strikes seven in the morning).
IV. Finale.
   Awakening and merry dispute (double fugue).
   Joyous conclusion.

In Dresden the same titles were used, and one of the points given was that the husband is a man among men, upon whom a kind fate has bestowed unconquerable humor.

"Unconquerable humor!" Perhaps after all and in spite of what I wrote a moment ago, those are right who think that Strauss, in his attitude toward programmatic clues and details, amuses himself at the expense of all who take him seriously. Certainly the following detail, referred to by Wilhelm Klatte, comes under the head of what Ernest Newman has called Straussian "tomfoolery." Near the end of the first section there is a figure of three short notes and a long one, for clarinets and muted trumpets, which is answered by a similar group of notes for oboes, muted horns, and a trombone. According to a note in the score, the first figure portrays the baby's aunts saying: "Just like papa!"

while the other represents the uncles saying: "Just like mamma!" [1]

A few more details. Before the clock strikes seven P.M., there is a passage supposed to refer to baby's bath. It recurs just before the glockenspiel indicates that it is seven A.M. The cry of the child ("a trill on the F sharp major 6-4 chord"), muted trumpets, and woodwind arouses everything into life. The "merry argument" in the final fugue is supposed to be in regard to baby's future. It ends in perfect good humor, in true German fashion, "with an emphatic reassertion of the husband's theme with which it began, suggesting that the father had the last word in the argument."

It is interesting to note what impression was made on that eminent Frenchman, Romain Rolland, by another possibly racial trait of this tone poem. In a chapter on *Musique Française et Musique Allemande* (in "Musiciens d'Aujourd'hui") he quotes Strauss as saying regarding his *Domestica:* "I don't see why I should not write a symphony about myself — I find myself as interesting as Napoleon or Alexander." "To this," Rolland continues, "some have answered that that was no reason why others should share his interest. But I shall not make use of this argument. I understand that an artist of his rank may entertain us with himself. What grates on me more is the way he talks. The disproportion is too great between the subject and the means of setting it forth. Above all, I do not like this ostentatious display of one's most secret feelings. There is a lack of the *intimate* in this *Sinfonia Domestica*. The hearth, the parlor, the bedroom, are

[1] See Klatte's analysis in the Strauss number of "Die Musik", January, 1904. Another elaborate thematic analysis of this work, by A. Schattmann, is included in Schlesinger's "Meisterführer Number 6."

open to any one who comes along. Is that the family feeling in Germany to-day? I confess that when I heard this work the first time, I was disagreeably affected, for these purely sentimental reasons, notwithstanding my affectionate regard for the composer."

Subsequently, Rolland adds, he revised this first judgment, because he found the music itself admirable; it is "his most finished work since *Death and Transfiguration*", with a gain over that work in richness of color and constructive skill. To be sure, "the first exposition of the themes is too schematic; Strauss's melodic vocabulary is, besides, extremely limited, and not very exalted; but it is very personal; one cannot possibly detach from him these nervy themes, glowing with juvenile ardor, which cleave the air like arrows, and twist themselves into fantastic arabesques. In the adagio of night, there are, besides some very bad taste, solemnity, dreaminess, tenderness, emotion. The fugue at the end is of astonishing gaiety. It is a mixture of *bouffonnerie colossale et de pastorale héroïque* worthy of Beethoven, whose style it recalls in its broad development. The final apotheosis is a stream of life. Its joyousness makes the heart dilate. The most extravagant combinations of harmonies, the most implacable harshnesses are obliterated and melt away, thanks to the marvellous commingling of tone colors. It is the work of an artist sensuous and strong, the true heir of the Wagner who wrote the *Meistersinger*."

Compare with this glorification the following, by Ernest Newman, who is by no means an anti-Straussian:

The Symphonia Domestica made a sensation at the time, partly because the simplicity of the subject — papa, mama and baby — brought the program at any rate within the scope of the intelligence of the average man. People who

were puzzled almost to the point of insanity by *Zarathustra* and its *Uebermenschen* and its *Genesende* and all the rest of that queer fauna, could recognize at once when the baby was squealing in its bath or the lullaby was being sung over it; and they had a kindly fellow-feeling for the terrible musician who now seemed to be even such a one as themselves. But the work, as music, was mostly unsatisfactory to musicians. It has its great and uplifted moments, such as the love scene, and there is considerable beauty in a good deal of the music that is written round the child. But the texture as a whole is less interesting than in any other of Strauss's works, the short and snappy thematic fragments out of which he builds it contrasting badly with the great sweeping themes of the earlier symphonic poems; the instrumental color is grossly overdone; the polyphony is often coarse and sprawling; and the realistic effects in the score are at once so atrociously ugly and so pitiably foolish that one listens to them with regret that a composer of genius should ever have fallen so low.

"It is to laugh!" as the Germans say. Rolland and Newman belong to the Supreme Court of Musical Criticism, yet one sees white where the other sees black. Is one of them color-blind, or is Strauss able to paint a thing black and white at the same time? It is this uncertainty that makes him so interesting by stimulating curiosity — and he knows it!

XII

AN ALPINE SYMPHONY

After producing the *Sinfonia Domestica* in 1903, Strauss devoted himself chiefly to the opera and ballet for more than a decade. *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne*, and the *Legend of Joseph* successively were penned and performed, most of them with sensational success. It seemed as if he had turned his back on

the concert stage, giving up orchestral poems as, at an earlier stage in his career, he had abandoned chamber music and pianoforte solo; but in 1915 he surprised the world with a new tone poem entitled *Eine Alpensinfonie*. The first sketches of it are said to have been made in 1911. It took him just one hundred days to write the score, which is dedicated to Count Nicolaus Seebach. After its first performance, which took place in Berlin, on October 28, 1915, it was pronounced a marvelous specimen of program music, excelling, in the opinion of some, everything previously done in this branch of the art. The Dresden orchestra had been brought to Berlin for this concert; Strauss himself conducted, and the enthusiasm at the close was so overwhelming that August Spanuth, who did not like the work, declared it seemed as if the applause had been "orchestrated by Strauss himself." The audience included scores of prominent musicians, among them conductors from all over Europe, who had come to imbibe the correct traditions.

They need not have worried. The *Alpensymphonie*, like its predecessors, presents no complicated riddles to the interpreter. One would naturally suppose that the *Domestic Symphony*, the subjects of which confessedly are papa, mama, and baby, would be simplicity itself, while a description of the Alps would overtop even the philosophic *Zarathustra*. Nothing of the sort. "A child could understand Strauss's latest work", said one of the Berlin critics. It is big, but clear, and the program unfolds itself in the music so clearly that one needs few cues after having been informed that the scenes depicted successively by the orchestra are: Night — Sunrise — The Ascent — Entrance into the Forest — Wandering beside the Brook

— At the Waterfall — Apparition — On Flowery Meadows — On the Alm (sloping pasture) — Lost in the Thicket and Brush — On the Glacier — Dangerous Moments — On the Summit — Vision — Mists rise — The Sun is gradually hidden — Elegy — Calm before the Storm — Thunderstorm — The Descent — Sunset — Night.

These words, in German of course, were written in the score by the composer himself. He had evidently made up his mind that he might as well reveal his program at once, without waiting for the commentators to dig it out of him piecemeal.

It may be said that, like *A Hero's Life*, *Guntram*, *Eulenspiegel*, the *Alpensinfonie* is more or less autobiographic, painting in vivid colors a day's experiences in climbing the Alps.

It is the first of Strauss's symphonic works that is concerned with nature since 1886, when he composed *From Italy*. The intervening three decades were devoted to problems connected with man.

In that time he had excogitated many a trick for making music realistic or pictorial. The orchestral forces, as we shall see presently, are the largest and most varied ever used in a symphonic score. Yet even with such a mammoth apparatus, Strauss once more illustrated the truth of Liszt's remark previously quoted, that "the merest tyro in landscape painting can with one stroke of his pencil produce a scene more faithfully than a consummate musician with all the resources of the cleverest orchestra." In the *Alpensinfonie* there are divisions, like the Night, Sunrise, The Ascent, Apparition, On Flowery Meadows, and in fact, all the others except the Storm, which cannot be definitely suggested by the composer. All he can do

is to write music appropriate to such scenes, and this Strauss certainly has done.

A "Thematic Guide", with fifty-nine excerpts in musical type, has been prepared by Max Steinitzer and published in Leipzig by Leuckart. For the first performance in New York, on October 26, 1916, by the Philharmonic Orchestra, the following brief but helpful analysis was made by W. H. Humiston:

Strings, bassoons, clarinets, and horns open with a descending motive — "Night"; — almost immediately, against a chord consisting of all the notes of the scale (B-flat minor) sounded by muted strings, the "Mountain motive" is sounded by trombones and tuba. Soon comes "Sunrise", nearly the full orchestra, with a descending theme. Edgar Stillman Kelley suggests that this is because the mountain tops are first lit by the sun's rays, which reach deeper and deeper until the valleys are suffused with light. The "Ascent", an energetic theme, first played by cellos and basses, is made much of in this part of the work. Hunting horns announce the entrance into the forest, a "flowing" theme represents the brook, a marked theme with a "Scotch Snap" is played by the brass as the waterfall is approached. Arpeggios, glissandos, rapidly descending scales, bells and triangle picture the cascade, a passage which, begun fortissimo, ends in extreme pianissimo. Oboes and clarinets play a lively theme which represents the "Apparition" which passes into "On Flowery Meadows" — where the theme of "Ascent" is introduced in the cellos.

Although this symphony is not divided into movements the first section may be said to end here. Now comes the Alm episode — cow bells are heard, and the "Alpenhorn", represented of course by the English horn (so called, though it is neither a horn nor English). The principal theme, however, of this episode is a gentle melody in 6-8 time played by the horn. "Lost in the Thicket" is portrayed by a fugato movement (a "fugato" is a short movement in fugue style), until the theme of "ascent" indicates escape from the entanglements, and again an open path toward the summit.

The cold air of the glacier is indicated by a transformation of the "waterfall" theme, with new material added. "Dangerous Moments" is a sort of intermezzo, which leads us to the "Summit." Here four trombones play a majestic motive, and as the magnificent view extends before one's eyes the various themes of the symphony are repeated in varying guise. The "Vision" is a transformation of the "View" theme, and the organ is heard in the "Elegy." The storm breaks and we begin the descent, to an inversion, naturally enough, of the ascent theme. The "Mountain" theme again is sounded, passing into "Sunset and Night"; and the symphony ends as it began, with "Night" and a long drawn-out B-flat minor chord.

It may well be that Mr. Kelley's idea regarding the descending theme for "Sunrise" was in Strauss's mind, although this idea would not be likely to occur to hearers without a cue, which he did not give. Extremely obvious, on the other hand, is the use of horns for the "Entrance into the Forest." This is a device much used by Wagner, Weber, and by other generations before them. But no one ever used twenty horns, as Strauss did in Berlin.

The grand orchestral outburst at the summit would of course be appropriate at any triumphal occasion.

Delightful to the ears is the "waterfall" music, with its sliding sounds, bells, and triangle. It recalls rather vividly the cascades of jewels in the *Ariane et Barbe Bleue* of Dukas, which Strauss may have heard in Paris. If he has borrowed these modern Parisian sounds, then the *Alpensymphonie* is a recent work. It is officially admitted that it was sketched five years before its completion. Other parts of it, however, indicate that it is much older, for there are distinct echoes of not only Wagner (especially *Rheingold* and *Walküre*), but even of Mendelssohn and Max Bruch,

and Strauss has not been in the habit in recent years of borrowing from conservative sources.

While I was listening to these sounds the question occurred to me: Is it not possible that the germs, at any rate, of this work date back to the time when, under the influence of his predecessors of the classical and romantic schools, Strauss composed more than a hundred works which have never been printed?

Whatever may be true regarding the themes and melodies of this score, which have little originality or charm as such, Strauss has given them the benefit of his ripest art, in developing them with his usual contrapuntal ingenuity and decking them out in the most brilliant and varied colors, intensified by the size of the orchestra. The climax is reached in the storm, which is of elemental power and makes one's flesh creep. When Mahler conducted Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* overture at a Philharmonic concert in Carnegie Hall, he doubled the piccolos whistling at the mastheads. For Strauss piccolos are not shrill enough. He invented an electric machine which approximates the real sounds you hear during an Alpine storm, and for the thunder there is another machine in which rolling cannon balls merge their sounds with those of huge rattles. This machine is even more terrifying in its results than the tonitruo which Paderewski devised for his Polish Symphony.

Madame Schumann-Heink has told me an amusing incident which occurred at the Cincinnati music festival in 1916, when the *Alpensymphonie* was being rehearsed for its first American performance. She sat on the stage on one of the rows of benches intended for the chorus. Near her were two other women, who, when the thunder machine started its din, fled in dismay, knocking her over!

After the storm there is a decided anticlimax. The Teutonic mania for length comes into play, and the work is made to last forty-five minutes, when twenty-five would have been better.

Besides these new machines, Strauss used Samuel's "aërophone", a device for reinforcing the lung power of the players of wind instruments, enabling them to hold on to their notes with undiminished vigor.

The orchestral forces include (besides at least eighteen first and sixteen second violins, twelve violas, ten cellos and eight basses in the string family), sixteen wood-wind instruments (four flutes, four oboes — one of them a heckelphone — four clarinets, and four bassoons); eighteen brasses (four horns, four tenor tubas, four trumpets, four trombones, two bass tubas), besides sixteen more behind the scene (twelve horns, two trumpets, two trombones); an organ, two harps, glockenspiel, celesta, cymbals, triangle, big and snare drums, cowbells, tam-tam.

Summing up, we get a total of one hundred and nine instruments; and it must be borne in mind that in Strauss's scores the instruments of one kind — like the first violins or the cellos — are often *divisi* — that is, divided or individualized, which adds greatly to the complexity of the score and the shimmer of kaleidoscopic sounds.

XIII

FESTIVAL PRELUDE

Mention must be made here of one more orchestral piece by Strauss, not a tone poem but a *Festival Prelude*, which was composed in 1913 expressly for the inauguration of the new concert hall in Vienna. It was, of

course, played in other cities, too. After hearing it in Berlin, Doctor Hugo Leichentritt wrote to the New York *Musical Courier* that Strauss himself conducted it at a concert of his own compositions given "for the benefit of Germans expelled from Belgium at the beginning of the war." The Prelude "does not belong to Strauss's happiest works. Its lack of contents is accentuated still more by the splendor of its orchestral apparel; pompous but shallow has been the signature of many a festival work made to order for a certain occasion. Anyway, the effect of very large orchestras is in my experience almost always unsatisfactory. There seems to be a maximum (about 100 players) beyond which enlargement does not mean improvement. It is an error to believe that an orchestra of two hundred players will give twice as much sound as an orchestra of 100. The axioms of arithmetic do not always hold good for acoustics by any means. Not only the increase in power is comparatively small; still worse it is that very large orchestras lose the flexibility, the proper balance of sound which are of so great importance in a well organized orchestra."

New York, usually in the forefront so far as musical novelties are concerned, did not lag behind. After the Philharmonic Orchestra had played the *Prelude* I wrote in the *Evening Post:*

When this piece was played in Vienna, a few weeks ago, the orchestra was augmented, in accordance with the composer's directions, to one hundred and fifty players, including nearly a hundred strings, eight horns, eight kettledrums, organ, and twelve trumpets, besides a new instrument, the "aërophone", a mechanical contrivance for helping the players of brass instruments to prolong the tone. This was found impracticable, and was not used last night, nor fortunately did Mr. Stranksy deem it necessary to increase his

orchestra to more than one hundred and ten players. This number was quite enough to make a record noise in Carnegie Hall; and as the record for noise seems to have been Strauss's aim in perpetrating this empty, bombastic work, it must be admitted that he succeeded thoroughly. But how infinitely more musical and enjoyable — for its orchestral coloring as well as its melody and harmony — a Johann Strauss waltz would have been! [1]

[1] My aversion at one time to Richard Strauss was so intense that I conceived the plan of a book to be called "The Greater Strauss and the Lesser", Johann, of course, being the "Greater." I like Richard better now than I did; but how much greater he would be if he could have had Johann's almost Schubertsean gift of creating real melodies!

PART V

SIX OPERAS AND A BALLET

I

GUNTRAM

After paying his respects to Liszt by composing three symphonic poems — *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration* — Strauss turned to his other idol and created his first opera. Like Wagner, he wrote both text and music, and both text and music of this opera, named *Guntram*, are Wagnerian to a degree that would seem amazing were it not that dozens of other composers at that time were also being swept along helplessly by the Wagnerian maelstrom.

In October, 1887, Strauss wrote to Bülow that he was engaged on the "self-invented, tragic original text of an opera in three acts." But several years elapsed before the poem was completed. Some sketches for the musical score were made in 1891, and the following year he took the finished text along on his trip for his health's sake, to Greece, Egypt, and Sicily, where the first and second acts were composed. The third was finished on his return to Bavaria, in August, 1893.

The germ of his plot Strauss found one day in a reference made in the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse* to the founding in medieval Austria of secret societies, partly religious, partly artistic, the members of which called themselves "Champions of Love" (*Streiter der Liebe*). Guntram is one of these knights of the thirteenth century, whose object is to use the art of song for the

purpose of teaching the blessings of peace and Christian love and thus uniting all mankind in brotherhood.

A small lake in a woodland glade is the scene of the first act. Guntram and an older member of the society, Friedhold, are seen distributing food to the starving subjects of the tyrannical Duke Robert, who has just put down a rebellion instigated by his cruelties. The Duke's own wife, the beautiful and kind Freihild, known as "the Mother of the Poor", has been forbidden to help them any more. Having received their alms from Guntram, the people depart, and he is left alone in the woods, meditating on the beauty of nature and the evils brought on by the passions of men. He thanks the Savior for having guided his footsteps to this oppressed land and invokes his aid in carrying out his plan of trying to soften the Duke's heart with his song. At this moment he sees Freihild, who is hurrying to the lake with the object of drowning herself. He seizes her and prevents her from carrying out her purpose; his pity for her despair changes to love when he discovers who she is, the kind protectress of the poor. Cries of "Freihild" are heard, and presently her father, the old Duke, arrives, and thanks him for having rescued his daughter. Guntram then accompanies them to the castle.

Festivities celebrating the victory over the insurgents usher in the second act. Guntram has been invited to sing. Doubting his ability to impress his views on an assemblage holding that might is right, he hesitates, but Freihild's sad mien makes him stay. Seizing his harp he sings the "Friedenserzählung", the song of peace in which he contrasts its blessings with the horrors of war. All are moved by his impas-

sioned appeal except Count Robert, who, jealous and enraged, orders his vassals to seize the bold minstrel. They hesitate, whereupon he seizes his sword and makes an attack; but Guntram is a good swordsman too, and the young Duke falls dead. The old Duke is at first paralyzed, but soon recovers his self-possession and orders the arrest of Guntram, who offers no further resistance.

His dungeon is the scene of the last act. While monks are heard outside, chanting over the body of the slain Duke, Wolfram is a prey to remorse over his act. His gloomy reveries are interrupted by the entrance of Freihild, who passionately confesses the love she feels for her rescuer, and begs him to escape with her. Friedhold now joins him, asking Guntram to appear before the tribunal of the Champions of Love and atone for his crime in using his sword to slay a man. Guntram, however, explains that that was no crime; he had simply acted in self-defense. The real sin lay in his being under the influence of jealousy when he stabbed the tyrant — he loved his wife. For this sin he must now renounce the love of Freihild and spend the rest of his life in hermit solitude.

Probably one of the reasons why *Guntram* failed was this ascetic turn of the plot. Freihild's father had died in the meantime, and to her fell the dukedom. Guntram could have married her and done a great deal of good along the altruistic lines pursued by his Brotherhood; instead of which he appears as a narrow-minded ascetic, egotistically thinking only of the salvation of his own soul. Modern audiences have no sympathy with such a diseased state of mind, any more than they have with the actions of those alleged medieval "saints" who labored under the blasphemous

delusion that they could please the Lord by eating putrid food and wearing filthy garments.

It is doubtful, however, if Strauss could have made *Guntram* a success even if he had ended it more operatically, with a ducal marriage procession and a wedding march. There were many other causes for its failure; for a failure it was, most emphatically. The one and only performance of it given in Munich, on November 16, 1895, was preceded by no end of gossip and chicanery. It was almost impossible to find singers willing to join the cast, because of the unwonted difficulties of the parts — difficulties culminating in the rôle of the tenor, of whom more was asked in the way of endurance than Wagner asks of Tristan in his last act.

The orchestra also was hostile, as Max Steinitzer relates; "yet it played with great conscientiousness. After the second and third acts there were repeated recalls for the composer, who no longer had full faith in his work and soon went with Schillings and Felix von Rath to Bozen in order to recuperate in the Hotel Greif, where, under pressure of adverse criticisms made in Munich, both publicly and privately, he planned radical cuts. But there was no second performance." Weimar heard the opera several times, and it was also produced in Prague and in Frankfurt, where it was included, 1910, in a cycle of Strauss's Opera.

Doctor Arthur Seidl has a long chapter on *Guntram* in his "Straussiana", in which he berates the Munichers for being so unkind to their fellow citizen. He admits that Strauss himself agreed with Weber that "first operas, like the first litter of puppies, should be drowned." Yet he declares that the *Guntram* fiasco

long remained a sore spot with its composer; and in Doctor Seidl's opinion the opera deserved a better fate.

Doctor Eugen Schmitz, in "Richard Strauss als Musikdramatiker", commenting at length on the many evidences of Wagnerian influence in *Guntram*, calls attention to the fact that unlike other imitators of the Bayreuth master, who have taken either the early or the later Wagner as model, Strauss in his first opera commingles reminiscences of both the early and the late Wagner. *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin* are suggested as well as *Tristan* and other works up to *Parsifal*, in the poem as well as in the music. It is hardly worth while to enter into details here (Schmitz does it), but the unmistakable suggestion of the *Waldweben* in *Siegfried* in the scene of Guntram's reverie in the woods may be cited as a good example.

Ernest Newman devotes no fewer than ten pages of his little Strauss book to *Guntram*. While noting that some of the music is "forced and ugly", he maintains that "the bulk of the score touches a high plane of beauty, and curiously enough, in spite of the occasional Waguerism of the music, the style throughout gives one the impression of being personal to Strauss. . . . Altogether *Guntram* is a great work, the many merits of which will perhaps some day restore it to the stage from which it is now most unjustly banished."

II

FEUERSNOT (FIRE-FAMINE)

The complete failure of *Guntram* so thoroughly discouraged Strauss that he gave up for half a decade all idea of composing another work for the stage.

Returning to the concert hall, he followed up his first operatic attempt with four more big tone poems: *Eulenspiegel*, *Zarathustra*, *Don Quixote*, and *Heldenleben* before he was ready once more to tempt fate in the theater. In the winter of 1899 to 1900 he started to compose *Feuersnot*, a comic opera in one act, with a libretto by Ernst von Wolzogen, based on an old legend of the Netherlands which Strauss had found some years before in Johann Wilhelm Wolff's "Niederländische Sagen", published by F. A. Brockhaus in 1843. It is reprinted in Eugen Schmitz's "Strauss als Musikdramatiker."

The name of this saga is "Das erloschene Feuer zu Audenaerde" (the extinguished fire at Audenaerde). It tells of a worthy young man madly in love with a maiden who, however, laughed at his suit. At last she promised to receive him if he would place himself in a basket and let her draw him up to her window at midnight. He eagerly followed the directions, but when half way up, the basket stopped and turned round and round till he was quite dizzy. There he remained suspended till morning to be scoffed at by all the townsfolk. When at last he was lowered to the street, he fled the town, mortified and filled with hatred for the girl he had loved.

In a neighboring forest he came across an old man to whom he told all that had happened. This old man was a mighty magician, who had many thousands of devils to do his bidding. He promised to avenge the young man and promptly sent his devils to put out all the fires and lights in the town. Soon the harassed citizens gathered in the market place to discuss what should be done. Among those who attended the meeting was the old magician, disguised as a

venerable burgher. He announced that he knew a way of getting fire again, but that the councilors must exercise all their authority to carry it out. On the assurance that they would do their utmost, the magician added: "Then you must bring here the girl who exposed the youth to ridicule, for she is the cause of all the misfortune, and she alone can bring help." Despite her struggles, the maiden was brought to the market place, where the magician ordered her to take off her clothes. No sooner had she done so when a flame darted out from her back. At the magician's bidding all the burghers had in the meantime provided themselves with candles, which they applied to the flame. As every house in town had to get its fire direct from this flame, it took hours, and there was much laughter.

Indelicate, ridiculous, and impossible though this story seems as a subject for a libretto, Strauss and Wolzogen nevertheless succeeded in preserving its outlines while mitigating its ocular objectionableness sufficiently to make it possible to produce the opera. The action is placed in Munich in the *fabelhafte Unzeit* (legendary No-time).

In accordance with an old custom, on midsummer eve, a number of children go from house to house, begging wood for the day's festive fires. A large basketful is presented to them at the house of the Burgomaster, whose beautiful daughter, Diemut, also distributes cakes among them. Then they go to the house opposite in which lives a young man named Kunrad, who is said by some to be eccentric, inaccessible, and uncanny, while others contradict this. After a good deal of knocking, he comes to the door. Dazed and absent-minded from the effect of his absorption

in books, he presently realizes what the interruption means, and enters into the children's festive spirit. With his own hands he tears off all the wood in his room that is not nailed down and gives it to the children. Then, to signalize his return to humanity, he seizes the beautiful Diemut and kisses her passionately on the mouth, to the indignation of the burghers and the intense annoyance of the girl, who vows vengeance.

An opportunity soon presents itself. As she is sitting in the balcony of her home, Kunrad appears below and pleads his love. She appears to yield to his entreaties and invites him to get into the basket that had held the wood given to the children. Forthwith she draws it up half-way to her room and then pretends that her strength has failed; so there he hangs in mid-air, while three girls, friends of Diemut, gleefully call the populace to witness the comedy. But Kunrad is a magician; at his word all lights and fires in town are suddenly extinguished; everything is in darkness. The children are frightened, while the citizens threaten the magician in the basket with violence. He, however, swings himself on to the balcony of the house, dimly lighted by the moon, and begins to harangue the excited citizens. He tells them that in the house now inhabited by him there lived once a great master, named Reichhardt, whose activity conferred great benefit on Munich but was repaid with opposition and hatred. He himself, he continues, has been called to continue the work of that old master, but to accomplish his high mission he needs "the true eternal light" of a woman's love. The extinguishing of the fires has been a punishment for the insulting mockery by Diemut; and only by her submission can the fire-famine be stayed. At this moment Die-

mut appears on the balcony and draws Kunrad into her chamber. The citizens below wait impatiently; presently a faint glimmer of light is seen in Diemut's room; and a moment later all the lights in town at once blaze out again. The voices of Diemut and Kunrad are heard united, and the Burgomaster receives the congratulations on his daughter's marriage.

Ernst von Wolzogen, who elaborated this amazing libretto, was much talked about at that time as the creator of the *Ueberbrettl*, a kind of stage entertainment of which the main characteristics were satire and the unblushing presentation of sex problems. In *Feuersnot* there are some needlessly coarse lines, and the climax, on which apologists have wasted ingenious sophistries, surely calls for an attitude too medieval for a modern audience. It is a situation which makes it unlikely that this opera, even if it had been a success in German cities, would have been exported to other countries.

By the satirical side of its plot, this opera still further limits its sphere of usefulness. In Munich alone could there be found an audience able to follow its allusions to the expulsion of Wagner and other details of local musical history. Entirely dropping out of his rôle, the magician Kunrad, on the balcony, suddenly becomes — Richard Strauss himself chiding his fellow citizens for not appreciating his genius, just as they had failed to appreciate the genius of his predecessor, Richard Wagner!

The text leaves not the shadow of a doubt on this point; the very names of Wagner and Strauss are introduced as puns; and when the power of Wagner is referred to, the orchestra intones the Valhalla motive from *Rhinegold*, while the punning reference to Strauss in the lines:

Den bösen Feind den treibt ihr nit aus,
Der stellt sich Euch immer aufs Neue zum Strauss

coincides with the orchestral proclamation of the war motive from *Guntram*.[1]

Musically *Feuersnot* presents a great contrast to its predecessor. While *Guntram* is steeped in Wagnerism, the second opera, apart from a few details, such as the Valhalla motive just referred to and the love duo which is based on the lovely motive of Gutrune in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, is entirely the product of Strauss's own mind and ripest methods. An essential part of this method is the alternation, for the sake of vivid contrast, of the simplest folk tunes with the utmost complications of polyphonic structure. While the children are merrily gathering wood, several old Munich folk tunes are sounded. We hear also, in a humorous way, that favorite of the beer halls: "Mir san net von Pasing, mir san von Loam", in which the Munich artisan daily expresses his feelings of superiority to the suburbanite.

While agreeing as to the charm of the simple folk tunes, or imitations of them by Strauss, the critics are not at one as regards the operatic value of the intricate orchestral score. In the opinion of Doctor Batka, Strauss's method is much too heavy-footed for works of the "Ueberbrettl" style: "Strauss is through and through a symphonist. His orchestra suffocates the word; he does not compose from within the character of the dramatic personages, but his music lies down with leaden weight on the easy-going action, and with its incessantly clever commentaries it destroys the naïveté and simplicity of the fun."

[1] No name lends itself more easily to punning than that of Strauss. The word means fight, bouquet, or ostrich.

The critic of the London *Times* seems to have been more favorably impressed. When *Feuersnot* was performed in the English metropolis, in July, 1910, he wrote that "it was the simplicity of the music which astonished the first night audience at Dresden when the opera was produced there in the autumn of 1901 (November 21). Schuch had recently conducted *Also Sprach Zarathustra* at one of the Symphony Concerts, and the rumor was current that compared with the opera the symphonic poem was mere child's play. Scheidemantel (for whom the part of Kunrad was written) was said to be in despair of ever learning his part, and more than one leading member of the orchestra had laid down his instrument at rehearsal and declared the music to be unplayable. And yet when it came to the first night there was apparently not a member of the audience, from the most old-fashioned stallholder to the most advanced student in the '5te Rang', who was not captivated by the simplicity of this much-dreaded opera." Close as it is to the *Heldenleben* and *Domestica*, the same writer continues, "*Feuersnot*, in its comparative restraint and simplicity, is more nearly allied in spirit to the earlier orchestral symphonic poems, *Don Juan* and *Tod und Verklärung*. It is also allied to them by its persistent melodiousness" — although "melody has never been a strong point in Strauss's equipment."

Concerning the climax of the opera, the same writer waxes enthusiastic: "When once the homily in *Feuersnot* is over, when once the musician is allowed to supplant the preacher, the music moves on with a gradually increasing impetus to its climax in the love scene. No love scene that Strauss has given us is as moving as this. It is free from the heavy sentimentality of

Zueignung and some of the more popular of the songs; it is free from the morbid eroticism of *Salome* and the morbid savagery of *Elektra;* it is simply passionate, with natural, healthy human passion."

III

SALOME

Why did Strauss compose a noisy opera on the noisome subject of Salome as treated by Oscar Wilde? Was it because he had failed when he set to music an operatic hero who ascetically renounced love in favor of a selfish hermit life, and failed again when he tried to set to music a theme "simply passionate, with natural, healthy human passion"? Was it chagrin at these failures that made him turn from the healthy to the morbid, from physiology to pathology?

Possibly; but it seems more likely that what made him choose *Salome* for his third libretto was simply the amazing popularity of Wilde's play in Germany, a popularity which naturally would also help an opera based on it. If this was his reasoning, the result proved its acumen.

What happened is vividly described by Doctor Batka: "This time he won a real success." To be sure, in spite of the popularity of *Salome* as a play, "a cry of indignation went up throughout Germany when it became known that Strauss had chosen this subject. Few approved of his freedom to search for the problems of life also in the most frightful abysses of feeling, as Kleist had done in *Penthesilea*, Marschner in his *Vampyr*. And sure enough, ever since the Dresden *première* of December 9, 1905, this subject has proved

its appeal to the public in the most dazzling manner. People said: 'It isn't proper,' yet all went to hear it. With uncanny rapidity the opera secured a foothold on stage after stage, even in foreign countries, and this in spite of the hair-raising difficulties of the music. He who, as a composer of operas, had hitherto enjoyed at most a *succès d'estime*, became an article for export, and, in the number of performances, took the lead among living composers of serious operas. Opinions collided with violence after each first performance in a new place, and *Salome* became the biggest operatic sensation of the newly-launched twentieth century."

Oscar Wilde's play was written originally in French for Sarah Bernhardt, who, however, did not appear in it. Neither in France nor in England or America, did it attain the vogue it enjoyed in Germany, and it remained for Strauss to give it sensational publicity in all countries where opera is cultivated.

Without being actually named, Salome is referred to in the New Testament by both Matthew and Mark. She is the daughter of Herodias. John the Baptist has been imprisoned by Herod because he has reproved him for marrying his brother Philip's wife. "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the King said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my Kingdom. And she went forth and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straight-

way with haste to the King, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the King was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the King sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

This Salome, who, in the Biblical allusions, is merely the executrix of her mother's cruel orders, Oscar Wilde converted into the most hideous, ghoulish monster ever exhibited on the theatrical stage — a monster as foul within as she is fair without.

"How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!" exclaims Narraboth, the young Syrian captain, when the curtain has risen on a terrace of King Herod's palace. He can see her in the banquet hall below. To the left is an old cistern, which is the dungeon of John the Baptist, or "Jokanaan", as he is called in the opera. Voices disputing violently about religion are heard in the banqueting hall, and from the depths of the cistern comes the warning voice of Jokanaan, prophesying the coming of one mightier than he. The soldiers discuss the career of this strange man — how he dwelt in the desert, living on locusts and wild honey, and then came and had disciples to follow him. He was terrible to look upon.

Salome presently comes out on to the terrace to escape the babel of tongues in the hall and the amorous stare of Herod, her mother's husband. Hearing the voice of Jokanaan, she asks about him. They tell her it is the prophet. "He of whom the Tetrarch is

afraid? Who says such terrible things about my mother?" She is anxious to see him, to speak to him; wants him to be brought up. This is strictly forbidden, but the enamored Narraboth, personally appealed to by her, forgets his orders, and Jokanaan comes out of the cistern. He bitterly denounces Salome's mother, the sinful Herodias, but Salome, as she gazes at him, is terribly fascinated by his appearance, his eyes, his voice. He demands to know who she is, and, on hearing her name, denounces her as a daughter of Sodom; but her infatuation increases steadily with his vehement aversion. "Let me kiss thy mouth!" she exclaims over and over again, till Narraboth, unable any longer to endure the spectacle, commits suicide, falling between Salome and the prophet. "Let me kiss thy mouth!" she continues to exclaim, till Jokanaan, cursing her, goes down again into the cistern.

Followed by Herodias, Herod now comes out and resumes his lustful stare at Salome. He tries to persuade her to drink wine, to eat choice fruits, but Salome heeds him not. Then again the voice of Jokanaan is heard from the cistern. Herodias asks the King to silence him and hand him over to the Jews who have long been clamoring for him; but Herod refuses; the prophet, he answers, "is a holy man — a man who has seen God."

The listening Jews dispute this statement, some of them denying that any man has seen God since the Prophet Elias. Then again the voice of Jokanaan is heard, proclaiming the coming of the Lord; and again the Jews fall to wrangling. The prophet raises his voice once more to revile Herodias, who demands that he be silenced; but Herod pays no attention to her words. His eyes are fastened on Salome. He

asks her to dance for him. She does not feel like dancing; but when he promises to give her in return anything she may ask, even unto the half of his Kingdom, she consents, after he has sworn it. She dances the "Dance of the Seven Veils", and then, kneeling before Herod, asks for the head of Jokanaan, on a silver charger. In vain the affrighted King offers her instead the largest and most beautiful emerald in the world, or his beautiful white peacocks. Stubbornly she reiterates: "Give me the head of Jokanaan"; till he is obliged, because of his oath, to yield. Herodias draws from his hand the ring of death and gives it to the executioner, who goes down into the cistern. Salome looks down and listens; after a terrible silence there is a sound — "something has fallen on the ground," she says. Presently the executioner's black arm becomes visible; he has in his hand a silver shield in which lies the head of Jokanaan. Herod hides his face, while Salome seizes the shield and cries out: "Thou would'st not let me kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well, I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit" — and she suits the action to the word. The disgusting scene is too much even for the hardened Herod. His lust turns to loathing. "Kill that woman!" he cries wildly, and the soldiers crush Salome beneath their shields.

Necrophilism is the name given in books on psychopathology to the disease from which Salome suffered — a disease which sometimes leads its victims to exhume corpses and caress them. It is allied with cannibalism; it is a horrible disease, a disease for medical, not for musical, treatment. That Richard Strauss should have found such a repulsive character a source of inspiration is amazing. As a matter of fact, the most

SCENE FROM *SALOME*

disgusting part of it, the nauseating final scene, quickened his creative powers to the utmost. There is not much that is beautiful in the score, but the music of this final apostrophe of the head-huntress is almost as beautiful, as touching, as sublime, as Isolde's Love's-death in Wagner's tragedy, which served as its model. It is a musical masterpiece, horribly, damnably wasted on the most outrageous scene ever placed before a modern audience.

"Disgusted but fascinated", "disgusted and bored" — these "seemed to be the predominant feelings in the audience", I wrote after the first performance of *Salome* in New York. Concerning this performance, more will be said in the pages devoted to Strauss in America. Here it suffices to recall the fact that only one performance of it was allowed at the Metropolitan Opera House, by order of the directors. It had been forbidden previously in Berlin, till changes were made. As a matter of course, the Kaiser's action in forbidding it in Berlin did more for the vogue of the opera than a thousand press agents could have done. Within a year two dozen cities had heard it.

Beside the final beatification, there is another musical masterpiece in this score — the "Dance of the Seven Veils." This is as interesting as *Don Juan*, and one wonders why it is not played frequently in concert halls, now that *Salome* has lost its vogue in the opera houses.

With the aid of his orchestral colors, Strauss succeeds in giving a majestic effect to the Jokanaan motive, though it is really very commonplace. The prophet's calm, flowing song contrasts strongly with the unvocal character of the other vocal parts, apart from some of the strains assigned to Salome, and Narraboth's exclamations about her beauty.

From a humorous point of view, the cackling altercation between the Jews on the question whether any one has seen God since Elias may also be called a masterpiece — as clever in its way as the quarrel between Mime and Alberich when the dragon is slain by Siegfried, in Wagner's music-drama. These things are permissible and admirable, though they seem the very negation of real singing. But Strauss makes a habit of treating the voice unvocally; he does it throughout his operas. The persons on the stage are little more than declaiming actors and actresses, who have to display superhuman ingenuity in making their words fit into the polyphonic web woven by the orchestra. There is one consolation: thanks to the prevailing dissonance and cacophony, nobody knows — or cares — whether the artists on the stage sing the right notes — that is, the notes assigned to them — or not. Who can fail to see the stupendous originality and advantage of this new style opera? What composer before him was clever enough to write music in which it makes no difference whether you sing or play correctly?

Strauss's music is often coarse and ill-mannered. It sometimes suggests a man who comes to a social gathering unkempt, with hands and face unwashed, cigar in mouth, hat on, and who sits down and puts his feet on the table. That's a sure way to attract attention! No boor ever violated the laws of etiquette as Strauss violates the laws of music — and needlessly so; for too much cacophony is like too much mustard or red pepper — it spoils the whole dish.

Lawrence Gilman has written a "Guide to Salome" — an excellent little book of eighty-five pages, with

musical illustrations of the motives and themes in the score. A glance at these themes shows how insignificant most of them are, from a purely musical point of view. Gilman uses twenty labels for the leading motives. They are Salome — Narroboth's Longing — The Jews — Jokanaan — Salome's Charm — Herod's Desire — Salome's Grace — Prophesy — Ecstasy — Yearning — Anger — Enticement — Kiss Motive — Fear — Herod — The Wind — Herod's Graciousness — Dispute — The Dance — Herod's Pleading.

Some of these motives are characteristic or expressive; but for the most part they depend for their effect of appropriateness on their transformations and combinations in the Wagnerian fashion — a procedure in which Strauss shows his usual diabolical ingenuity and cleverness.

While following Wagner in his use of leading motives and their manipulation, Strauss deviates considerably from his model in the use he makes of the instruments. In Wagner we find the culmination of the art of what might be called idiomatic orchestration — the art of getting from each class and group of instruments the sounds most peculiar to them. Strauss, on the other hand, delights in trying to make each instrument stammer in a foreign tongue, as it were. He treats them, in a word, as relentlessly as he does the singers. As Lawrence Gilman has well put it, "it is not every music maker who dares to devise his instrumental color schemes with the serene disregard for the tradition displayed by the author of *Salome* — to require, for instance, his violas and cellos to play parts immemorially delegated to the violins; to make his double basses cavort with the agility and

the abandon of clarinets; to write unheard-of figures for the tympanni player, and to demand of the trombonist that he transform his instrument into a flute; yet Strauss, at almost every point in his score, makes some such demand upon his executants."

When Salome peers into the cistern, wondering why she hears no sound of a death struggle, there comes suddenly "an uncanny sound from the orchestra that is positively blood-curdling. The multitude of instruments are silent — all but the string basses. Some of them maintain a tremolo on the deep E flat. Suddenly there comes a short, high B flat. Again and again with more rapid iteration. Such a voice was never heard in the orchestra before. What Strauss designed it to express does not matter. It accomplishes a fearful accentuation of the awful situation. Strauss got the hint from Berlioz, who never used the device (which he heard from a Piedmontese double-bass player), but he recommended it to composers who wished to imitate in the orchestra 'a loud female cry.' Strauss in his score describes how the effect is to be produced and wants it to sound like a stertorous groan. It is produced by pinching the highest string of the double-bass at the proper node between the finger-board and the bridge and sounding it by a quick jerk of the bow." [1]

While Mr. Krehbiel found those uncanny noises "blood-curdling", I was differently impressed. Somehow, I wrote, "they missed their effect; they sounded so much like the honk, honk of an automobile as to make many of the hearers smile. As a matter of fact, there are not a few other things in this music that

[1] From H. E. Krehbiel's "Chapters of Opera", which contains a long and excellent disquisition on *Salome*.

might be treated from a humorous point of view, were it not for the horrible subject."

Three times I have heard *Salome*, and each time the impression made on me was strangely like that of a bull fight I once attended in Madrid. The picturesque trappings and elaborate ceremonies transported me back in imagination to the Middle Ages. I winced at the cruelty to the blindfolded horses that were ripped open by the bulls. For the bulls I felt no pity, but I would have been glad to see them kill a few of their tormentors. The predominant feeling was boredom — yes, I was bored, frightfully bored, and left after the third of the six doomed bulls had been butchered. I would have left *Salome* each time I heard it, had not my duty as a critic compelled me to submit to the ordeal of such scenes and sounds succeeding one another without a break for nearly two hours.

Afterwards I was much interested to read what Weingartner, the eminent conductor and composer, wrote regarding the impression made on him by some of Strauss's works: "exactly the same sensations that a weak work by Brahms awakens in me; the same insipid, empty, and heavy feeling of torment."

It is surprising to read what even so staunch a champion of Strauss as his life-long friend, Doctor Arthur Seidl, has to say about *Salome:* It seems to him rather "a symphonic poem with living pictures" than a real music drama. After repeated hearing, and "in spite of my personal friendship and admiration for Strauss, I cannot enjoy *Salome* or adapt it to my taste", he writes. "Like a heavy dream it always moves along — a nightmare, which weighs on me for a long time."

IV

ELEKTRA

Richard Strauss was not permitted to complete his *Elektra* and then keep it in his desk for seven years before allowing the public to hear it. His publishers insisted on getting the score page by page, so that this composer had probably the experience familiar to journalists, of seeing the first half of what he had written in type before all of the second half was penned. Dates were set for first performances before the singers had been secured. The cities of Germany and Italy contested for the honor of the first performance, even as the seven rival cities of Greece claimed the distinction of being Homer's birthplace. Milan offered a few thousand more than Turin, and got the coveted score, which was more eagerly awaited in Italy than the new opera by Puccini. In Germany, Dresden got the *première*, because Strauss felt grateful to that city for having come to the rescue of *Salome*, when it had been forbidden in Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere. On January 25, ~~1900~~ 1909, *Elektra* had its first hearing. Within four weeks it was produced in Munich, Frankfurt, and Berlin; and many other cities soon joined the procession. The publisher of the score paid twenty-seven thousand dollars for the privilege, as against fifteen thousand dollars, the sum paid for *Salome*. Nothing succeeds like sensational success.

Oscar Hammerstein, having found *Salome* so profitable, got ahead of the Metropolitan in securing first option on *Elektra* for New York. He had to pay ten thousand dollars for it, and deposit an additional eighteen thousand dollars as advance royalties. It

was, of course, too late in the season to get the scenery painted and the music rehearsed; so he postponed the American *première* to the anniversary of the *Urauffürung*, as the Germans say, in Dresden, the need of further preparation being apparent. The first hearing was deferred to February 1. On that night, accordingly, a large audience gathered at the Manhattan Opera House, ready to be electrified, or, perchance, Elektracuted.

The general objection to *Salome* was not so much against its orchestral cacophony and melodic barrenness, as against its subject — the public exhibition of necrophilism, the most hideous of all perversions of the erotic instinct. In *Elektra* there is also a touch of perverted feeling in the scene in which the heroine endeavors to persuade her sister Chrysothemis to aid her in slaying their mother, for having abetted her paramour, Aegisthus, the present King, in murdering their father, King Agamemnon; but it is episodic, and likely to escape all except those readers of the original text of the libretto who are familiar with treatises on psychopathology. The passion which forms the main theme of this opera is revenge. "I look on Elektra as the personification of revenge," Strauss himself said, "and as the Goddess of Vengeance, I have characterized her musically." Now, the feeling of revenge is not in itself morbid or unnatural, but it may reach a degree of violence in which it verges on insanity; and that is the kind of mad vengeance which Elektra personifies. Even the ancient Greeks, whose sentiments were cruder, and in many ways differed from our own, looked on matricide as a crime that could be committed only by a mad person, and for that reason Solon made no special law against it.

Elektra is a princess denatured and maddened by the thought that she must take deadly revenge on her mother, Klytemnestra, for the murder of Agamemnon. Ever present in her mind is the thought of the king, her father, struck on the head with an axe as he lay naked in his bath — now red with foaming blood. Her brother Orestes has been banished; she herself has been maltreated, deprived of her modesty. Her actions are those of a wild beast — "a wild cat", the maids in the royal palace call her. She is warned that because of her actions and thoughts she is to be imprisoned in a dark tower, where she may moan, deprived of sun and moon.

Mad also — maddened by terror — is the guilty Queen Klytemnestra. With her sallow, bloated countenance, her ugly form covered with precious stones, she presents a repulsive appearance. Fear has made her terrible. She cannot sleep without being tormented by dreams worse than nightmares — dreams that cannot be cured except by some new sacrifice of human blood. She asks Elektra whose blood may flow that she may have peace at last, but both know that her own son Orestes is in her mind. But Elektra replies: "Who must bleed? Thine own throat, when the hunter hath taken thee", and she proceeds to draw a picture with horribly vivid details of her mother's slaughter. As they glare at each other like wild animals, servants enter and give the Queen information which causes the evil expression in her face to change to one of triumph. "Orestes is dead!" is the message. Elektra does not, cannot, believe it. Yet it may be true, and revenge must have its way. She implores her sister to aid her in slaughtering the guilty pair with the same axe that cut their father's head, but the

SCENE FROM *ELEKTRA*

timid, womanly Chrysothemis shudders at the thought, and makes her escape.

The messenger who brought the news of the death of Orestes was Orestes himself in disguise — a disguise so complete that Elektra knows him not when he confronts her, nor does he recognize her, the cadaverous shadow of his sister. Her joy at his return is engulfed, like everything else, in her cyclonic passion for revenge. He shudders at her words, but promises to act. In her excitement she forgets to give him the axe. But he has another weapon, and presently the mother's screams are heard within the palace. "Strike, strike again!" cries Elektra, screaming like a demon. A fight ensues among the adherents of Aegisthus and Orestes. Aegisthus enters that house, is seized and dragged away, yelling murder and help. Twice his face is seen through a window before he meets his fate. Elektra's joy is unbounded. She dances a triumphant dance of death, then falls on the ground lifeless, while Chrysothemis calls for Orestes.

Such is the drama which, like the *Salome* of Oscar Wilde, appealed to the taste of Richard Strauss so much that he felt an irresistible impulse to set it to music. In judging the motives for this choice, caution is in place. It seems likely that unnatural, violent, black, exaggerated passions appeal particularly to Strauss's taste, but apart from that, there is a musical reason why he selects such subjects. The Russian composer, Rachmaninoff, said that Strauss is interesting when he stands on his head, but commonplace when he walks on his feet. That tells the whole story. Strauss has found by experience that it is only with the utmost difficulty that he can create a simple melody. It is infinitely easier for him to per-

form acrobatic feats in orchestration — in giving nearly every instrument in an orchestra of a hundred and twenty a part of its own to play, and weaving these multitudinous parts into a tapestry of extraordinary intricacy. The result of such close interweaving of tones is a constant clashing and tangling — the creation of incessant dissonance, of linked cacophony long-drawn-out. That is Strauss's specialty, and naturally he seeks for his librettos poetic subjects in harmony with his dissonantal musical proclivities.

Hofmannsthal's drama of revenge, which is a modernization of a plot diversely used by the ancient Greek dramatists, especially Sophocles, was an ideal one for Strauss to set to music. No one but he would have thought of selecting it, but for him it was just the thing, and it must be admitted that, from his point of view, he has scored a complete success. Could music such as was written by Gluck, Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Bizet, Massenet, Debussy have been made to fit such a libretto? A smile is the only possible answer to this question. Richard Strauss alone could have imagined music sufficiently horrible to match Hofmannsthal's ghastly, hysterical play.

So completely obsessed is Strauss by his specialty of making uglier music than any one else, that he brings it into play even when the situation calls for softer strains. In the recognition scene, when Orestes embraces Elektra, we expect tender music, as a matter of course, but Strauss lets loose an orchestral riot that suggests a murder scene in a Chinese theater. Some soothing bars do follow a little later, but they are commonplace. Strauss lacks the highest of all gifts of genius — tenderness — a gift so frequently in evidence in Wagner, for instance. Even the words of Orestes:

"The dogs of the house knew me, but not my sister", did not suggest a tender note to the composer of *Elektra*.

Some German critics have claimed that this opera is an advance over *Salome* in the art of orchestral coloring, but it is not. In neither of these operas does Strauss provide more than a fraction of the color effects possible with so big an orchestra. With eight horns, seven trumpets, and eight clarinets at his disposal, what lovely new tints might not be revealed! Strauss uses them chiefly to increase the dissonantal chaos. It took the composers of three countries three centuries to discover the peculiar idioms of each class of instrument. Strauss pays no attention to that, but makes each instrument grunt or squeal in a language foreign to it. Is this progress? Is it progress to use the whole orchestra nearly all the time, and nearly always fortissimo? Has not contrast a value in art? If you emphasize every word in a sentence, you emphasize none.

Champions of Strauss claim that his opera marks an advance over Wagner's in this that his leading motives undergo constant changes with the altered situation! As if Wagner's did not do the same in an amazingly subtle and dramatic manner. Wagner's motives are, moreover, real melodies, so distinct and individual (besides being always appropriate), that one remembers them easily. The Strauss analysts have discovered in the *Elektra* score more than forty "leading motives"; but nearly all of them are trifles of no musical value, useful only for being pitted against one another in a merciless contrapuntal jumble. If the reader who has not heard *Elektra* desires to witness something that looks as its orchestral score sounds,

let him, next summer, poke a stick into an ant hill and watch the black insects darting, angry and bewildered, biting and clawing, in a thousand directions at once. It is amusing for ten minutes, but not for two hours.

Is it progress to use the human voice as Strauss does? Madame Schumann-Heink, who is noted for her big robust voice, found the strain of singing Klytemnestra in Dresden so great that she resigned after the first performance. She has related how, at the rehearsals, when Conductor Schuch, out of regard for the singers, moderated the orchestral din, Strauss declared: "But, my dear Schuch, louder, louder the orchestra; I can still hear the voice of Frau Heink!" (I have this from Madame Schumann-Heink herself.)

Strauss's maltreatment of artists and their voices is illustrated by the fact that Elektra is on the stage almost every one of the hundred and ten minutes that the opera lasts. She not only has to act incessantly, and dance at the end, but also use her voice much of the time in its highest register, singing, screaming, fortissimo. At the first performance in New York, the interpreter of the part, Madame Mariette Mazarin, was so exhausted that she fainted away when she came out at the end to acknowledge the applause.

Another trial for the singers was the presence on the stage of so many living animals, "four-legged and smelling Oh! Oh" as Madame Schumann-Heink wrote to me. Strauss wanted also living bulls — a dozen of them — and only desisted from his demand when the stage manager asked what if any of them jumped down on the orchestra. And then the expense! Even an ox would cost three hundred marks! The eminent contralto's record of this speech at the Dresden

rehearsal is so amusing in the Saxon dialect that I will cite it:

"*Herr Doctor nee, nee, das können wir nicht riskiren, en eenziger Bulle wenn der das rote Gewand von der Frau Kammersängerin (ich war es) sieht, kriegt er die Wuth und wir alle fliegen in die Lüfte — die Scenerie, na, und wenn das Vieh erst ins Orchester springt! Man kann's ja nicht ausdenken, und dann die Leihgebühren für enen Ochsen alleene, unter Mark 300 pro kopf täten mer keenen kriegen — nu gar zwölfe!*"

New York heard *Elektra* before London. After the enormous success everywhere of *Salome*, curiosity in England was at fever heat. The New York representative of the London *Times* asked me to prepare a long dispatch about its American *première*. Lack of time prevented me from complying, but I did accept a cabled request from the Glasgow *Herald* for a letter about this performance. This letter I closed with the following paragraph:

> Is Strauss insane, as some of his countrymen have conjectured? Not in the least; he is one of the most intelligent men before the public. Or is it all a huge joke, as others maintain? This seems more likely. Strauss has repeatedly shown that he is a humorist, and, maybe, he is having fun with his contemporaries, trying to see how far they will humor him in his choice of repellent subjects, in his amazing acrobatic feats of orchestration, and his maltreatment of the human voice. Whatever the truth may be, it is undeniable that Strauss is an interesting man to talk about, and that he is making a great deal of money.

When, finally, London did have its chance to hear *Elektra*, thanks to the enterprise of Thomas Beecham, there were scenes of great excitement and enthusiasm. Big headlines were printed in the newspapers: *Superb Production — Triumph of Elektra — King and Queen*

Present — Great Outburst of Enthusiasm, and so on. "It was a night," wrote the critic of the *Telegraph*, "fraught with infinite possibilities. Only to think of it — the most advanced and eagerly discussed opera of the past quarter of a century given within twelve months of its initial production, in what is regarded as, operatically speaking, unprogressive, unenterprising England — England to which such masterworks have hitherto only found their way after many years' battling and buffeting on the Continent and in America. . . . It is certain that Covent Garden has never previously witnessed a scene of such unfettered enthusiasm. . . . Mr. Beecham practically conducted from memory."

This same critic could not "resist the feeling that the vital spark of genius is wanting; that it is music of the head rather than the heart; the expression of motion rather than emotion. Indeed, the fever heat at which the instrumental writing is maintained, the riot and welter of the score, its frantic leaps and web of tangled sounds, leads to the impression that the composer fears, even for a moment, to check its impetuous eloquence for fear the means by which the ends are achieved might be disclosed." The melodies, "when stripped of their sensuous and beautiful orchestral trappings, are not a little trite and ordinary." However, this Judge concludes: "*Elektra* may not be great music in the sense that Wagner's music is great, but it is great drama — very great drama!"

Is it really "great drama"? On this subject another London critic said: "We have described it as decadent — it is worse than that: it is nauseous. Mr. Kalish, in his admirable translation, has toned down the repulsiveness of the original text, which teems

with 'putrefying carrion', 'ulcers', and loathsomeness of every description. The yells and groans of the wild passions let loose in this debased tragedy imperiously demand a corresponding fierceness in the musical setting. Moans and shrieks, demoniac laughter, physical and mental disease, can only be expressed by discords, not by a sweet even flow of melody. The wonder is that Strauss, while closely following the emotional convulsiveness of the libretto and thrilling, where it is needed, his listeners to the marrow, has been able to ennoble the sordid play by his wealth of pure musical invention. . . . When all is said and done, *Elektra* is a great masterpiece by a great composer."

"A tragedy unsurpassed for sheer hideousness in the whole of operatic literature" is what the critic of the London *Times* called *Elektra*. "There is truly not any but the most rugged, grandly heroic aspect of beauty in this nightmare of cruelty and brutality." George Bernard Shaw declared concerning this opera that "not even in the third scene of *Das Rheingold* or in the Klingsor scenes in *Parsifal* is there such an atmosphere of malignant and cancerous evil as we get here."

A Berlin critic referred to the composer of *Elektra*, as "The Barnum of German Music."

An elaborate guide of forty-two pages to this opera has been prepared by Otto Rose and Julius Prüwer; English version by Alfred Kalish. The score calls for these instruments: eight first violins, eight second violins, eight third violins, six first violas (later fourth violins), six second violas, six third violas, six first celli, six second celli, eight double basses, piccolo, three flutes (also two piccolos and two flutes), two oboes, cor anglais (also third oboe), heckelphone, E flat

clarinet, four B flat clarinets (two B flat and two A clarinets), two basset horns, bass-clarinet (in B flat), three bassoons, double bassoon, four horns, two B flat tubas, two F tubas (also horns 5, 6, 7, 8), six trumpets, bass trumpet, three trombones, contra bass tuba, contra bass trombone, six–eight kettledrums (two players), glockenspiel, triangle, tambourine, small drum, whip, cymbal, big drum, tam tam (three–four players), celesta *ad libitum* (according to space), two harps (to be doubled if possible).

V

THE ROSE CAVALIER

Possibly with a view to emphasizing the fact that his next opera was to be of the comic persuasion, Strauss played a joke on the German newspapers by keeping from them all detailed information regarding the *Rosenkavalier* and finally giving it first to the London *Times*. Maybe gratitude to the English for the ado they had made over his *Elektra* also came into play. At any rate it was amusing to read in England's leading newspaper of January 27, 1911, an account of the *première* in Dresden on the preceding night of Strauss's new opera in which this sentence occurred: "Probably the *Times* article of last Saturday, which was largely copied in the German papers, may have assisted the audience to follow the rather complicated incidents."

After the sensational success of *Elektra*, Strauss had put himself at once in communication with Hugo von Hofmannsthal for another libretto, with the proclamation: "This time I shall compose a Mozart opera"; by which he meant a work simple and tuneful. He

was in such a hurry about it that he did not wait for the complete text but asked the playwright to send him each act, and, in the third act, each scene, as it came from his pen — an inartistic proceeding, inasmuch as it made it difficult to introduce desirable changes. He himself, as Steinitzer relates, was not pleased with the third act, but that did not prevent him from going ahead with it. The composition began on May 1, 1909; and in about a year and three quarters he had completed the enormously complicated score of an opera lasting three hours and a half.

In the biographic section brief reference was made to the fact that when Strauss offered the right of first performance of the *Rosenkavalier* to the intendant of the Royal Opera in Dresden, he included among his conditions a written guarantee that *Salome* and *Elektra* must each be performed at least four times for a period of ten years; and that the intendant refused to accede to this condition. Strauss had to yield. To justify himself he wrote a very long letter to the editor of the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, which appeared in that periodical in the issue for September 28, 1910. In this open letter he called attention to the fact that Baron Putlitz and Count Seebach had repeatedly assured him that, judging by past experiences with *Salome* and *Elektra*, these two operas were likely to remain profitable additions to the repertory for years to come, wherefore they did not deem it necessary to make a compact regarding them; but that Strauss himself thought it better to include the two operas in the contract. He calls attention to the fact that when Wagner gave permission for the production of his *Meistersinger* and *Ring of the Nibelung* in certain theaters, he insisted on receiving royalties also on

Tannhäuser, for which none had been paid up to that time.

"I did not ask in my contract," he continues, "that *e.g.* my hitherto unsuccessful *Guntram* be accepted together with the *Rosenkavalier*, but only that *Salome* and *Elektra* — which, in spite of much opposition, have richly earned their claims to inclusion in German repertories by reason of good artistic successes and large receipts — should acquire this 'citizenship', which would safeguard them for a number of years against accidental conditions which are often more potent than the best intentions of the most capable theatrical managers, and which have often in the past endangered the most successful works, or even killed them. The history of German opera offers most instructive illustrations thereof."

With biting sarcasm, Strauss thus closes his epistle: "Those, to be sure, were beautiful times when authors were completely at the mercy of theatrical managers. I hope, however, that those times are passing away."

It would have been well if Strauss had used the keen edge of his sarcasm in curbing the extravagance, loquacity, and coarseness of his librettist, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the same playwright (best known as the author of *The Fool and Death*) who provided the *Elektra* text. Hofmannsthal is not a humorist, and although he calls the *Rosenkavalier* a "comedy for music" it is for the most part broad farce, relying for its effects on horseplay, vulgar words and actions, and the use of the quaint Viennese dialect. One might say of the whole opera what one of the characters says of the incidents in the last act: "*Das Ganze war halt eine Farce und weiter nichts.*"

The outlines of the plot have been used, with vari-

ations, a hundred times in other farces. The principal character is Baron Ochs, an exceedingly vulgar sort of Rabelaisian Falstaff, whose coarsest utterances were not included in the version used in New York. In the first act he makes an early morning visit to his cousin, the Princess von Werdenberg. She is the wife of one of Maria Theresa's field-marshals, and during his absence she has been consoling herself with the ardent attentions of a youth of seventeen, Octavian, a young gentleman of noble family. The Baron's untimely arrival puts an end to the love-making, and Octavian hides behind a screen.

The object of the Baron's matutinal visit is to ask the Princess to suggest a cavalier who could carry to his chosen bride a silver rose, according to the customs of the period. The Princess promises to find one for him. Octavian, in the meantime, to escape detection, has adopted the attire of a lady's maid. The Baron, a notorious lady-killer, sees in the supposed maid another prospective victim, and extends to her an invitation to supper, which is accepted. After he has left and the Princess has finished her breakfast, her people arrive for the *lever;* she grants audiences and charities while her hair is being dressed. Then are dismissed all but Octavian, who has once more resumed a man's dress. She sadly foresees the result of his embassy and how she will probably be forgotten for a younger woman; but once more she enjoys his caresses, and, after he is gone, gives orders to have the silver rose sent to him.

The second act takes us to the house of the wealthy army contractor, Herr von Faninal, who has recently been ennobled, and whose beautiful daughter, Sophia, Baron Ochs has decided to marry. The rose-bearer

arrives, and, as the Princess had foreseen, promptly falls in love with Sophia. She does not wish to marry the Baron, who is present, and whose coarseness and familiarities disgust her more and more. She finally refuses to marry him, whereat her father threatens her with a life spent in a convent. A duel between Octavian and the would-be groom serves only to anger Faninal still further, and the act ends with Sophia in despair, and Octavian planning relief.

In the third act the writer of the book undoubtedly had in mind the scene in which Falstaff is tormented by strange wood creatures, but its atmosphere is not that of a forest, but of a dubious restaurant. Here Octavian, disguised again as a girl, has promised to meet Baron Ochs. Through the inventions of two Italians, Valzacchi and Annina, who are ready to do anything for gold, the Baron's discomfiture is planned. Heads are made to appear and disappear, a man comes up through a trap door, Annina appears with four children and claims the Baron as her husband, a police commissary arrives on the scene, ostensibly to help the Baron, but, in reality to cause him more troubles; he mislays his wig, and in the midst of all these tribulations, Sophia and her father arrive. Faninal has the grace, toady though he be, to be disgusted with his prospective son-in-law, and to break off the match. The Baron then tries to console himself with Octavian, or Mariandel, as he calls "her"; but Octavian, retiring behind the bed curtains, removes his feminine clothes, and reappears in his rightful garb. During this time the Princess has arrived, and has magically cleared the atmosphere by sending most of the people away, by telling the Baron the whole thing was a "Viennese masquerade", and by uniting the lovers.

SCENE FROM *ROSENKAVALIER*, ACT II

It takes twenty-seven vocalist-actors, besides a chorus, to perform this unsavory farce. That it appealed to the imagination of Richard Strauss is not strange, since he liked the librettos of *Feuersnot*, *Salome*, and *Elektra* well enough to set them to music. Regarded from a merely technical point of view, there is nothing in the plot that could not be used effectively by a writer of comic music. It is when we read the "book" that we realize what an impossible task Hugo von Hofmannsthal set Strauss. There are hundreds of details which in a spoken comedy would be in place but which in a musical setting are almost sure to be lost.

Instead of telling his librettist that this sort of thing would not do, Strauss fell into the trap and tried to mirror every detail of the text in the music. At this sort of thing he is extremely clever, but the result is unoperatic; for in an opera one needs bold strokes and melodies — the musical painting must be *al fresco* to be noticeable and effective.

Whenever a new Strauss opera is announced, the press-agents lay great stress on its being "different." The *Rosenkavalier* was claimed to be something entirely new for Strauss; instead of complexity we were to have Mozartean simplicity, instead of the horrors of tragedy the merriment of comedy. The horrors (except in so far as vulgarity is one of them) are avoided, and there is some working of the humorous vein which Strauss had previously shown in his *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks;* but the simplicity is not apparent except in the waltzes which are plentifully scattered throughout the score. These waltzes are tuneful and sprightly, but rather commonplace as melodies. Their chief charm lies in their unforeseen

harmonic changes — modulations as enchanting as those of Schubert in his waltzes, yet quite different.

To hide his poverty of melodic invention, the composer falls back as usual on his exceptional skill in laying on orchestral colors. A hundred and three players are called for by the score, and there is a band behind the scenes. One of the musical gems of the opera is the presentation of the silver rose in the second act; here, with the aid of harps, celesta, flutes, and solo violins, an ethereal effect is produced which suggests the grail music in *Lohengrin* without being a copy of it. Generally speaking, there is more contrast and variety of coloring than in most other scores of Strauss. He actually allows the trombones, the double basses, and other hard-worked instruments to be silent occasionally. There are frequent solo passages, especially for wood-wind instruments. The ingenuity shown in the employment of leading themes is amazing. In Alfred Schattmann's guide to the *Rosenkavalier* there is a list of one hundred and eighteen themes and there are eighty-eight pages of text, describing minutely the use made of them by Strauss. It is all very clear, but purely intellectual. With all its warmth of coloring, this music does not warm the hearer, because it lacks substance. The score of this opera is like a peck of nuts, all polished and pretty to look at, but hollow.

The above verdict on the *Rosenkavalier* was written after its first performance in New York on December 9, 1913. After several more hearings, I am still bored by most of the music and still unable to find real fun in the plot, or true wit in the coarse dialogue; but I sympathize with the point of view of the eminent Hamburg critic, Ferdinand Pfohl, who, after the first

performance of this opera in his city, wrote that the endings of the first and third acts are so exquisitely beautiful that they make one desire to hear the opera over and over again, forgetting and forgiving the excessive lengths, the coarsenesses, the farcical excesses and other assaults on good taste.

Pfohl calls attention to the fact that even at the Dresden *première*, where the cast was so carefully chosen, it was seldom possible to understand the words of the text, which, in a comedy, are so important. The same assertion was made by another eminent German critic, Paul Schwers: "The individual words were drowned in the uninterrupted flow of the musical stream, and with them most of the witty points."

This calls attention to the chief fault of Strauss as an opera composer — a fault dwelt on by his biographer, Steinitzer, who frankly admits that Strauss does not sufficiently distinguish between music for the eye and music for the ear. An expert reading the score cannot but be delighted with hundreds of subtle details, which, however, escape the attention of the audience, for which, after all, an opera is written.

The same truth is vividly brought out by the critic of the London *Truth* (February 5, 1913): *Der Rosenkavalier* has proved a huge box office success, and its many merits have been cordially recognized all round, but will it achieve enduring popularity in London? I am afraid it is rather doubtful. It is all Strauss's own fault. He will be so diabolically clever and complicated. He is not content to charm and delight; even in comic opera he must stagger and astonish as well. This is his besetting vice, and it is amazing that so clever a man does not realize it. His technical strength is his artistic weakness, and is almost solely responsible for the defects of *Der Rosenkavalier*. One is reminded per-

petually of that famous criticism of a certain performer ascribed to the late Master of Trinity: "Mr. Blank sometimes enchants and sometimes astonishes, and the less he astonishes the more he enchants."

This is precisely Strauss's case, and the fault is more noticeable than ever in a work which is intended to be light and comic. Even if complex music is wanted at all here, this is the wrong kind of complexity. Compare it with that of Wagner, for instance. There is plenty of thematic elaboration in *Die Meistersinger*. But every bar of it tells. Most of Strauss's is based on an absolute miscalculation of the capabilities of the human ear. His phrases are too scrappy, and their treatment is too involved. The texture is too close, there is no time to take it in, and therefore it goes for nothing. The ingenuity of it all is remarkable. In the matter of sheer brain work there is no modern music to come near it — or ancient either, for that matter. But what does it benefit if so much of it can only be seen — in the score — and not heard — by the ear? If Strauss would only trust to his inspiration more, and to his intellect less, how much better it would be!

There is no objection, of course, to complexity per se. Otherwise some of the greatest pages in all music, from Bach to Wagner, to say nothing of Strauss himself, would stand condemned. It is complexity which does not come off which is so utterly futile, and I should say that about a third of the score of *Der Rosenkavalier* falls within this category. Fortunately, the remaining two-thirds are very different, and include some of the loveliest music and also some of the merriest and wittiest that Strauss has ever given us. If only it had all been written in the same strain and at half the length, it would have been twice as attractive. But we must take genius as we find it, and if *Der Rosenkavalier* is not beyond criticism there is certainly only one man who could have written it.

The extraordinary interest manifested in this opera, not only in Germany but in other countries, is indicated by the number of arrangements of selections from it made for various instruments. The London publish-

ers, Chappell and Co., for instance, list the following in their catalogue:

Waltz for Piano (Otto Singer) containing the best Waltz themes from the opera.
Ditto for Piano for 4 hands.
Ditto for 2 Pianos for 4 hands (complete).
Ditto for Violin and Piano.
Ditto for Violin solo.
Ditto for Flute and Piano.
Ditto for Mandolin solo.
Ditto for Mandolin and Piano.
Ditto for 2 Mandolins.
Ditto for 2 Mandolins and Piano.
Ditto for full Orchestra.
Ditto for Salon-Orchestra.
Ditto for Parisian-Orchestra.
Ditto for Military Band (Infanterie-Musik).
Ditto for Brass Band (Kavallerie-Musik).
Ditto for Brass Band (Jäger-Musik).
Ditto for English Military Band.
Dancing Waltz for Piano.
Ditto for Cither.
Ditto for Cither.
Ditto for full Orchestra.
Ditto for Salon-Orchestra.
Ditto for small Orchestra.
Ditto for Parisian Orchestra.
Prelude to the 1st Act for Piano.
Ditto for Piano for 4 hands.
Breakfast scene (Act 1) for Piano.
Ditto for Piano for 4 hands.
Ditto (intermezzo) for Violin and Piano.
Ditto for Violin solo.
Ditto for Flute and Piano.

Nachklänge (Fantasie) for Piano (O. Neitzel).
Suite for Piano.
Ditto for full Orchestra.
Ditto for Salon-Orchestra.
Ditto for small Orchestra.
Ditto for Parisian Orchestra.
Ditto for Military Band (Infanterie-Musik).
Ditto for Brass Band (Kavallerie-Musik).
Ditto for Brass Band (Jäger-Musik).
Ditto for English Military Band.
Ditto for English Military Band.
Scene of Ochs von Lerchenau (II. Act) by composer.
Walzerfolgen of III. Act, by composer.

VI

ARIADNE ON NAXOS

Beginning with *Don Juan* in the concert hall and with *Salome* in the opera house, everything done by Strauss turned out a sensational success, no matter how unusual, objectionable, or eccentric his procedure happened to be. Is it a wonder that he became more and more reckless in the demands he made on musicians and the public? The demands culminated in his asking those who wanted to hear his sixth opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, to sit through two long hours of an old French comedy before the opera began.

At a banquet following the first performance of this combination play-opera, he referred to it as "an artist's dream." "An artist's nightmare" might have been an apter characterization, for of all the crude, distressing theatrical jumbles ever perpetrated, this new-fangled entertainment, in its original form, seems to have been the worst.

It came about in this way. Max Reinhardt, widely known as the producer of *Sumurun* and other specimens of the new "symbolical" stage art, had rendered Strauss and Hofmannsthal valuable aid in staging *Der Rosenkavalier* in Dresden. Out of gratitude to him, they decided to combine a play with an opera. The play chosen was Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Reinhardt supplied the stage decorations and the costumes, while Strauss himself conducted the first public performance, which was given at Stuttgart on October 25, 1912.

Not having had an opportunity to hear this production, I must content myself with quoting the most lucid account of the plot I have been able to find. It is by Arthur M. Abell, and appeared in the New York *Musical Courier:*

Molière's play, though good old French comedy of its kind, is of no especial interest today, particularly in Hofmannsthal's mutilation. One Jourdain, a bourgeois of unusually common origin, after making a fortune in trade, has installed himself in a sumptuous home and is surrounded by a host of servants and all the external evidences of wealth. The boorish but good hearted simpleton longs for the polished manners and the allures of the aristocracy. He takes lessons in dancing, singing, fencing and philosophy; he also becomes an art Maecenas and furthers a young musical genius, the composer of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Jourdain is in love with the Marquise Dorimene, a charming widow, and he gives a dinner in her honor. Count Dorantes, a courtly but reprobate nobleman, in return for many financial favors at the hands of Jourdain, induces the marquise to accept the invitation by leading her to believe that it is he who is giving the affair for her at Jourdain's house. For the entertainment of his two guests, after the dinner, Jourdain has engaged two troupes of singers who are to present the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the burlesque *The Unfaithful Zerbinetta and Her Four Lovers*. Both works

have been composed by Jourdain's protégé, mentioned above. The music played during the repast is a very clever symphonic poem in miniature, illustrating, chiefly with reminiscences, the different courses. While the Rhine salmon is being served, the orchestra plays snatches from *Rheingold*, and during the roast mutton the bleating of the sheep from *Don Quixote* is heard. The banquet is interrupted by the unexpected appearance of Jourdain's wife, who makes a violent scene. The disgusted marquise would leave the house, but is detained by the count for a time. Jourdain finds it necessary, however, to curtail his program, so he orders the composer to combine his two works and to give them simultaneously. The young apostle of the Muse is in despair, but there is no help for him, and the changes are quickly made.

Now comes the opera itself, with Jourdain, his two guests, the young composer and his teacher as audience. Here we have a stage within the stage. Hofmannsthal has made a free and by no means interesting use of the mythological story of Ariadne, who has been deserted by Theseus and left on the desert island of Naxos. She sings her despair and longs for death. In vain do her three companions, the singing numphs, endeavor to console her. The sudden entrance of Zerbinetta and her lovers transport us from the tragic to the ludicrous. Finally the god Bacchus appears, wins Ariadne's love, and transports her to realms of eternal bliss.

Hofmannsthal adds nothing to his fame by his mutilation of the Molière comedy and by this weak libretto. It is difficult to see wherein his fame is justified any how, for the *Rosenkavalier* libretto, too, has many objectionable features. Strauss swears by him, but the operatic world does not, and it, after all, has a weighty word to speak.

On this point, O. P. Jacob, who wrote up the *première* for *Musical America*, agrees with Mr. Abell: "It is a pity that for his libretto he did not choose an abler man than Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Strauss's adherence to Hofmannsthal has certainly estranged a

great percentage of the public. Let the composer emancipate himself from this librettist, whose reputation, to me at least, is unaccountable, and he will surely win over a great number of those who to-day are his bitter opponents."

To make the confusion worse confounded, *Ariadne auf Naxos* was pitchforked on to the stage of the new opera house in Stuttgart before it had been definitely arranged or properly rehearsed. The London *Times's* account of the Strauss Festival in Stuttgart gives these details, under date of November 2, 1912:

> No doubt the actual time occupied seriously handicapped Strauss, and prevented him from securing a satisfactory balance by musical links and explanations. As it was, the play was considerably cut down even between the full rehearsal and the first performance. At the rehearsal the charming duet of the shepherd and shepherdess presented to Jourdain in the first act of the play was left out; it was put back in the performance and some of the spoken dialogue sacrificed in its place. Moreover, the acting version of the scene in which the musicians consult about the simultaneous presentation of the opera and the Nachspiel, which is entirely Hofmannsthal's own, was quite different from that given in the printed libretto. The latter is considerably longer, and was supposed to take place before the curtain of the operatic stage, the players all hurrying on to the stage at the approach of Jourdain and his friends and the opera beginning immediately, but in practice there was an interval between this scene, which took place in the banqueting-room, and the opera itself. The change, of course, served to disintegrate the scheme still further.

Notwithstanding this amazing unpreparedness, the critics were invited, not for the first public performance, but for the final rehearsal; and before the beginning of this rehearsal an announcement was made from the stage asking the newspaper men to read a placard

hung up in the foyer for their guidance. On this placard they were asked not to write reports of *Ariadne* till after the third performance! Of course they could not have done this without being promptly discharged by their employers. It was apparently one of Strauss's jokes — an exhibition of humor about on a level with his musical quotations from Wagner's *Rheingold* and his own *Don Quixote* while the Rhine salmon and the mutton are served at the banquet. But it made talk, and talk means free advertising.

There was much talk also about the fact that while the first performance was given in Stuttgart, the tickets for it had been sold *en bloc* to be resold by the mercantile house of Wertheim in Berlin. The price fixed for the first three performances was fifty marks (twelve dollars) but Mr. Jacob reported that after the first performance the tickets were to be had at reduced rates — first for thirty, then for twenty-five, and even for fifteen marks. But there was great enthusiasm at the performances.

It seems a pity that Strauss allowed his collaborators to lead him into this quagmire, for on *terra firma* he would have probably done some of his best work. Indeed, he did achieve notable results, notwithstanding great and needless handicaps. Mr. Abell, to be sure, calls attention to the fact that "thematically *Ariadne* offers nothing that is new; here Strauss again reveals his great weakness — the lack of originality of melodic invention." He also noted a number of reminiscences — suggestions of Mozart, Schubert, Wagner. On the other hand, "the duet between Ariadne and Bacchus toward the close of the opera is one of the most beautiful and impressive things Strauss has ever penned; here, too, the orchestra soars and surges in a sea of

tones. The scene suggests Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The quintet with Zerbinetta and her four lovers, who sing and prance about in harmonious rivalry, is a masterpiece of light polyphony; its *légère* effects make one forget its difficulties and the skill shown in mastering them.

"One finds, in the music set to parts of the play, many surprises, charming dance forms, as the minuet, the polonaise, and during the fencing scene a wonderfully brilliant piano solo (which was given a masterful rendition by no less an artist than Max Pauer, who modestly sat in the sunken orchestral pit), yet the play itself was much too long, and after the public rehearsal on Thursday evening, which I attended as well as the *première* itself on Friday, Strauss himself was forced to concede numerous cuts."

William von Sachs, who wrote an account of *Ariadne* for the New York *Evening Post*, found that "pretty, graceful melodies are strewn throughout the score, while a comic quartet for men's voices with a soprano part for the concluding measures, which in point of musical workmanship could not well be surpassed, proved so catching that even the typical amateur, who longs for 'some pretty tune to carry home with him' would this time not have been disappointed."

The two most novel and interesting things about the *Ariadne* music are the size and make-up of the orchestra, and the introduction of colorature — florid song of the floridest kind in a Strauss opera, of all places in the world! Zerbinetta has an ornamental aria which fills no fewer than twenty-four pages of the printed piano score — an aria which, in the words of Mr. Abell, "brings back to us the palmy days of Rossini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer; but the difficult fireworks of

the vocal part are accompanied by arabesques in the orchestra of ravishing effect such as those masters of a past epoch never dreamed of in their boldest flights of fancy. This aria calls for an extraordinary coloratura singer who can take high F sharp."

Thus did Strauss apparently attempt, with sly humor, to confute those who scolded him for subordinating the human voice. He may have had in mind, too, the charge that he needed a mammoth orchestra of over a hundred players to express himself, when he decided to employ only thirty-six musicians in this opera.

These thirty-six players, however, all have to be soloists, as in a high-class string quartet. Extraordinary feats are demanded of them. For the Stuttgart *première* Strauss engaged players who own old Italian violins, four of them by Stradivari, the result being unusual richness of tone. "Very novel effects," wrote Mr. Abell, "were produced by a new invention, a harmonium with wood-wind and horn effects, by virtue of which the thirty-six musicians often seemed augmented to seventy. A piano and a celesta added to the strange tonal combinations."

While more than a dozen German cities followed Stuttgart in staging *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the clumsy and incongruous combination of old French comedy and modern German opera militated against the enduring success of this strange experiment. Four years after the Stuttgart festival, the work was produced in a new form, entirely remodeled, concerning which Strauss himself said: "The Molière comedy has been entirely eliminated, and the erstwhile interlude in dialogue form, which represented the transition from the comedy to the opera, I have set to music and

elaborated considerably. This interlude, which Hugo von Hofmannsthal has also subjected to a literary revision, is intended to represent the tragedy and tragicomedy of the youthful composer dependent on a Mæcenas, singers and lackeys, similar to the youthful Mozart in the beginning of his glorious career.

"And so the young composer has become the leading figure, vocally as well as dramatically, for the creation of which my friend and colleague, Leo Blech, is to be essentially credited. It was acting upon his advice that I composed the female voice for this youth.

"The role of the ballet-master has also been rearranged and elaborated and is written for a tenor. Furthermore, I have tried a new experiment, transforming the secco-recitatives into smaller musical numbers. The finale has also been altered, the humorous satirical epilogue being eliminated, so that the opera is concluded with the duet between Ariadne and Bacchus."

Under date of November 10, 1916, Arthur M. Abell wrote to the *Musical Courier* regarding the first performance in Berlin of the new version "which was awaited with as keen an interest as if a real *première* had been announced":

The transformation of the *Ariadne* was a difficult but necessary undertaking, as there was no doubt as to the ineffectiveness of the work so long as it was given jointly with Molière's comedy, *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The opera was not easily separated from its framework. An introduction had to be invented in order to explain the curious fact that two different actions — the Zerbinetta burlesque and the Ariadne drama — are produced at the same time. Thus librettist and composer set to work again, and now *Ariadne auf Naxos* is being given in the form of an ordinary opera with a short one-act introduction. Richard Strauss and

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, his librettist, have been fairly successful in their endeavor to save the opera for the stage.

The contents of the new introduction are briefly as follows: The action takes place in the house of a rich man — the wealthiest man of Vienna, as the book calls him. This man desires to entertain his guests with a theatrical performance. A young composer is engaged to introduce on this occasion his first opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*. But his rich patron has also invited an Italian troup of buffoons to perform a burlesque — *Zerbinetta and Her Four Faithless Lovers* — the production of which is to take place at the same time with that of the *Ariadne* opera. The young composer, the chief personage of the introduction, comes to the house of the Maecenas with a heart full of hopes for his future and filled with lofty ambitions. When he learns that his beloved work is to be given in connection with a trivial burlesque, he is in despair and tries to withdraw it. But in vain. Zerbinetta, the beautiful and fascinating leader of the Italian troup, succeeds in conquering his desperate mood. She wins his heart, and so the ridiculous double performance can take place. The rich Viennese and his guests do not take part in the action; they only form the audience.

To this original and witty prologue Strauss has written appropriate music. His creation of the young composer's part is a success in itself. The rôle like that of Octavian in the *Rosenkavalier* is written for soprano. The other personages of the introduction — the music teacher, the dancing master and the major domo, who is the only speaking person in the opera — are humorous inventions and well characterized.

The introduction is the chief innovation of the new *Ariadne*. The original opera proper is given without any interruption, which adds much to the lucidity and effectiveness of the work. There are, however, a few changes, which may be called improvements; for instance, the shortening of the long Zerbinetta aria which has also been simplified to some extent, and the effective conclusion which Strauss has given to the final duet of Bacchus and Ariadne.

VII

THE LEGEND OF JOSEPH

There is a dance — musically speaking a splendid dance — in *Salome;* there is one in *Zarathustra;* another in *Elektra;* while the *Rosenkavalier* has an orchestral score, one fifth of which consists of waltzes. It would not have been a great shock, to read that its composer had up his sleeve for his next surprise, a regular Johann Strauss operetta, made up entirely of dance rhythms. Instead of it came *Ariadne* — a broth spoiled by its too many cooks. But after *Ariadne* behold Monsieur Richard Strauss making his début in Paris as the composer of a pantomimic ballet — heralded with trumpets and trombones, with drums and tubas, as an entirely new *genre* of art.

One might say that a pantomimic ballet was the logical outcome of Strauss's tendencies. Ignoring the isolated colorature aria in *Ariadne,* we may sum up these tendencies as an increasing inclination to disregard and subordinate the singers, making them mere members of the orchestra — speaking instruments, whose words, however, are rarely audible in the general din. Why have human voices at all? Why not let dancers elucidate the story with their gestures, movements, and facial expression?

To Max Steinitzer we are indebted for the interesting information that Strauss had visions and plans of pantomimic ballets as early as the year 1897. Once he planned a scenario himself, and Wedekind submitted others to him. What he feared was that it would be difficult to secure the necessary exact correspondence between the music and the action and gesture on the

stage. Presently there came from Russia a company which proved that this exact union can be attained. Paris had become the home of the Diaghileff Ballet Russe, an extraordinary aggregation of "star" dancers — Nijinsky, Karsavina, Miassine, Fokine, Bolm, and others, whose representations of pantomimic ballets — among them *The Golden Cock*, *Scheherazade*, *Thamar*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, *L'Après-midi-d'un Faune*, *Les Sylphides*, *Papillons*, *Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *The Sacrifice to the Spring* — had created sensation after sensation, not only by their dances and the music associated therewith, but by the strangely fashioned and colored costumes and backgrounds designed by Bakst and others, which for five years, as Bernard Shaw remarked, furnished the sole inspiration for Paris fashions in women's dress.

It was for this Ballet Russe that Richard Strauss composed the music to his *Legend of Joseph*, with the assistance for the plot and scenario of the inevitable Hugo von Hofmannsthal, aided and abetted by Count Harry Kessler, who seems to be responsible for the allegorical expansion of the simple Bible story. The choreographic features are the work of Fokine.

The rising curtain reveals a great hall in the palace of Potiphar. He sits with his wife at a raised table. Among those present are a female slave, some giant mulattoes, and a Sheik receiving and weighing gold dust. Slaves approach Potiphar's wife, with precious stones and other treasures, but she, who suffers from an "almost passionate weariness of life", heeds them not. The next attempt to cope with her ennui is by means of a Nuptial Dance. Women are brought in in litters; some of them are veiled, others unveiled.

The dance "represents symbolically how the Bridegroom on the wedding night unveils the Bride." One of the women emerges from the midst of the others to dance the Dance of Burning Lovelonging, the Dance of Sulamith. This is followed by a dance of Six Turkish Boxers. They are gradually "excited to a sort of madness and ecstasy like fighting cocks . . . one feels that unless somebody intervenes they will kill each other." Finally the mulattoes bind the arms of the boxers behind their backs and lead them away.

Potiphar's wife is still bored. But the next diversion introduced for her creates a startling change in her attitude. We now enter (in the words of Heinz Tiessen, whose elaborate guide to this ballet has been done into good English by Alfred Kalish) "into a mood of heavenly purity, tenderness, and limpid clearness as of Paradise." A golden hammock is carried down the stairs, followed by two young harp players with small golden harps, two flute players, and two boys with cymbals. When the hammock is opened Joseph, a boy of sixteen, is seen asleep in it, wrapped in a shepherd's mantle of golden yellow silk. The Sheik wakes him; he gets out of the hammock and dances slowly. He makes four leaps to the four directions of the compass (the part was written for Nijinski, whose specialty is leaps); he shows weariness; his movements become "a glorification of God"; he seems to fly; "divine laughter seems embodied in him." The guests are lost in admiration. "Potiphar's wife, during this dance, is gradually roused from her apathy to interest, and then to passionate wonder and admiration. A new world of feeling is opening before her. She sits as if under a spell, leaning far forward, breathless, with burning eyes." She fills a

bowl with precious stones and makes signs for Joseph to approach. He ignores them. Whereupon she sends a slave to bring him to her. She drops the necklace on him and dismisses the guests. Evening closes in. Joseph is left alone; there is a couch for him in a corner; he lies down, after saying his prayers, and falls asleep. In his dreams he sees an angel standing by his bed to keep watch over him.

The door opens, and Potiphar's wife, a lamp in hand, comes stealthily near. With her left hand she touches his bare shoulder and shudders. She strokes his hair, bends over him, and presses a kiss on his lips. He wakes up and with a look of horror, jumps from the couch. Crouching in a corner, he is seized with violent trembling. She attempts to disrobe him, but he wrests himself free and throws on her looks of contempt. Finding her pleadings in vain, her feeling suddenly turns from passion to hatred. Calling her slaves, she orders them to seize Joseph, then sinks fainting into the arms of one of her attendants. "Women of the palace appear in wild haste, moaning almost like dogs, and busy themselves round Potiphar's wife." There is a ghost-like dance, followed by a second in which "the gestures of the dancers are intensified till they become an Oriental witches' dance of hysterical wildness, as of whirling dervishes."

Joseph stands motionless, as if in a trance. Chains are put on him. Potiphar enters, full of foreboding. Joseph's mantle has been brought to his wife; she tears it and casts it from her, pointing passionately to Joseph. Preparations are made for his torture with red-hot tongues. At this moment an Archangel of superhuman stature comes down in a shaft of light till he hovers over Joseph. At a touch the chain falls

from the youth. Then he takes Joseph by the hand and leads him towards the steps. Potiphar's wife stretches out her arms convulsively, then strangles herself with her string of pearls. The attendants take her body, and as the funeral procession starts, young angels are seen in the rosy dawn making music while Joseph and the Archangel are seen disappearing in space.

In the directions for staging this plot we read that "the scene, the stage furniture, and the costumes are throughout in the manner of Paolo Veronese, and thus follow, in style and fashion, those of the period of about 1530. The Egyptian characters wear Venetian costumes; Joseph and the dealers who bring him to Potiphar, Oriental dress of the sixteenth century."

Why this anachronism? Is the fact that Veronese and other medieval artists, following the naïve custom of their day, painted the old Biblical characters and scenes in the Venetian costumes of their own day, a reason for doing so incongruous a thing in our days of theatrical realism? One guesses that the dates were mixed in order to give Bakst a better chance to excogitate novel and gorgeous costumes. The official explanation, however, was that (in the words of M. D. Calvocoressi) the whole play is a mixture of plain realism and ideal superhumanity, constantly interchanging or interwoven. "The subject is founded on the Bible story, but aims at exhibiting the violent conflict resulting from the contact between the sumptuous, shallow, impulsive world of Paganism — in the present case, Pharaoh's court — and the mystical purity of Joseph, who represents the Hebrew monotheistic spirit."

A German critic, writing in the *Allgemeine Musik-*

Zeitung, declares that, so far as Strauss's music is concerned, he could not find in it the contrast between these realistic and idealistic elements which is supposed to pervade the whole plot. He scoffs at the idea that Strauss has in this work created a new form of art, a "music-drama without words", superior to the mimodramas of Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Reynaldo Hahn, the splendid *Peri* of Dukas, or the fascinating pantomimes of Stravinsky. From these, the *Legend of Joseph* differs chiefly through its attempts to philosophize in dances and gestures — attempts which assign it to the realm of boredom. After hearing the music several times, this critic liked it better than at first, yet the general feeling of disappointment was not dispelled. Over one scene he waxes enthusiastic: The dance of the moaning women "atones for much that precedes it." This scene is overwhelming. "The choreographic motive and its realization are unsurpassable, and in the demoniac, splendidly rhythmic music we note the master who created *Elektra*. Here everything is of one piece. It is the only scene which gripped me, and it shows what Strauss might do in this art form, if he had a subject worthy of him."

H. O. Osgood, in his article for the *Musical Courier* (New York), also found that the best choreographic feature of the evening was the "peculiar dance of the women expressing their hatred of Joseph for having seduced Potiphar's wife." The Dance of the Boxers "had rather an unexpected comic effect, and resembled the drill of a German turnverein more than anything else." Boxing to music is a novelty which Mr. Osgood recommends to sporting clubs.

Doctor Leopold Schmidt, of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, calls attention to the unusual number of instruments

of percussion used by Strauss in this score; several celestas are called for, besides cymbals, glockenspiel, castagnettes, xylophone, wood and straw instruments, in addition to a wind machine, organ, piano, heckelphone, tenor tuba, and, of course, all the usual orchestral apparatus of strings, wood-wind and brass. Doctor Schmidt further remarked that the music "does not once rise to the fervor and depth of expression to be found in *Ariadne*, the somewhat cold symbolism of the action making no demand for such." On the other hand, "this music is valuable and significant because of its strong melodic impulse. Among contemporary productions it is one more shining example of the unlost capacity for melodic creation. With ever greater clearness Strauss is developing along this line. His *Joseph* themes will take firm hold of the hearer and cling to them."

He repeats that "more than by its power of pictorial characterization and its glowing colors does the music of *The Legend of Joseph* impress us by the abundance, the verve, and the natural flow of its melody." Yet he does not feel sure regarding the future of this work: "Whether the *Legend* will take root in Germany is difficult to predict. The cult of the nude calls for an absence of bias which is not always to be found amongst us. And still less have we at our disposal dancers who, in the solution of such problems, can rival the Russian artists."

These things Strauss, with his usual lack of practical sense, overlooked. Immediate success in Paris, however, was not denied him. As a despatch to the London *Times* reported: "the combination of Strauss and the Russians brought all Paris to the doors of the Opera House tonight (May 14, 1914). Seats which

were sold three weeks ago for forty francs were resold today by speculators at double that sum." This correspondent was struck by the fact that some of the costumes had "the sharp, definite look of playing cards."

As for the Parisian critics, some of the most eminent did not comment on this novelty at all, for the reason that no tickets had been sent for the *première;* and the final rehearsal, to which critics in Paris are usually invited, had not been open to them. Reynaldo Hahn found "*frénésie pythique dans l'improvisation orchestrale.*" Alfred Bruneau also was agreeably impressed; but most of the critics found more to blame than to praise. Henry Quittard, in *Le Figaro*, found some parts "*longues, obscures et d'une puérilité un peu déconcertante.*" None of the critics seem to have liked the scenario; nor, according to Doctor Schmidt, was the performance as good as it might have been. For some reason or other Nijinsky, to whose measure the part of Joseph had been cut, was not on the stage, but was one of the spectators.

PART VI

SONGS AND OTHER VOCAL WORKS

SONGS AND OTHER VOCAL WORKS

In the year 1900, when I was writing my book on "Songs and Song Writers", I asked the publisher of the songs of Richard Strauss (Joseph Aibl, in Munich) to send me a complete list of them. Instead of the list he mailed me the songs themselves, about fifty in number at that time. Not many of them had been made familiar in American concert halls. After carefully perusing and repeatedly playing them, I wrote as follows:

The first thing that strikes me about these songs is their difficulty, and the composer's predilection for unusual keys. The Vienna publishers who used to object to Schubert's pianoforte parts and beg him to use keys with no more than three flats or sharps, would stand aghast at Richard Strauss, whose pages sometimes look like a wilderness of flats and sharps, with the head of a note timidly peeping out here and there. Familiarity, however, soon breeds contempt for these accidentals; while the songs grow more and more beautiful. The art of tonal coloring, which is so noticeable in the orchestral works of Strauss, is also applied, as far as possible, to his pianoforte parts. He is fond of surging arpeggios sweeping the keyboard up and down, producing harmonies so rich and glowing that one often feels tempted to keep the pedal down longer than necessary, and linger on the resulting chord just to enjoy the euphony. Schubert was the first to indulge in chords alluring by their euphony — color for color's sake — but he never dreamed of such orchestral glories in the pianoforte, of such arpeggios, such commingling of weird harmonies. Here are harmonies

not anticipated by Bach, Chopin, or Wagner; harmonies beyond the daring of even Liszt and Grieg.

Some of these harmonies — or discords — are frankly ugly, but they are characteristic, and we soon get to love them as we do faces that have more character than beauty. We look for something more than beauty in a man's face — why not also in a man's music? Yet beauty there is, too, in these songs — sometimes in alluring abundance, as just stated; nor is it confined to the piano part. Elaborate as the piano part is, it does not swamp the voice, which stands out as boldly as in Wagner's music dramas when they are properly sung and played. These songs are not much easier for the singer than for the pianist, and they are not for bungling amateurs. Serious music-lovers may as well begin with some of the easier ones — such as *Morgen*, *Ach Liebl ich muss nun scheiden*, *Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar*, *Die Nacht*, *Nachtgang*, *Ach weh mir unglückshaftem Manne* — which also happen to be among the best. The appetite will soon grow by what it feeds on, and those who are not afraid of technical difficulties will have a rich menu to choose from. As regards the poems, it is self-evident that the writer of the *Zarathustra* program makes some novel experiments in the *Lied* too. Among the songs in the comic vein I may mention *Herr Lenz*, and *Für fünfzehn Pfennige*.

When Ernest Newman wrote his little book on Strauss, the number of these songs had increased to over a hundred. He was much less favorably impressed by these hundred than I had been by the first fifty. "A careful study of them," he says, "gives one the impression that he is not a born song writer, and that comparatively few of his *Lieder* have much chance of survival. . . . Nowhere, in truth, does he appear to such poor advantage on the whole as here. He has written some good songs, and one or two exquisite songs, but also a number that are commonplace, or dull, or pretentiously empty, or stupid, or downright

ugly. Only those who have conscientiously worked through them all a few times, desirous of seeing good in them wherever it is to be seen, can realize the woeful waste of time and labor that the majority of them represents."

More favorable is the verdict of Doctor Leopold Schmidt:[1] "Strauss is so interesting as a song-writer because he is strong as a creator of melodies. His melody, though formally considered not always quite original, gets an individual aspect through a certain inherent sensuous warmth. This warm-blooded temperament and vocal spontaneity of most of his songs have already given them a general vogue, have made them favorites of singers and music lovers. The best of them it is hopeless to try to out-trump with the songs of Hugo Wolf or other writers; they constitute, so far as one can see, the lyrical precipitate of our time."

This notion that Strauss in his songs has crystallized modern lyrical feeling is based on the fact that for a time he devoted himself to setting to music the verse of contemporary poets like Bierbaum, Dehmel, Mackay, Falke, Morgenstern, Liliencron, Henckell, Busse. Now, while it may be conceded that these poets wrote along new lines of social thought, it does not follow that Strauss created a new school of songs (as not a few writers have intimated he did) simply because he set to music these contemporary verses. There is nothing in the music of his songs to justify such a claim; nothing that differentiates them entirely from *some* of the songs of Schubert, Liszt, or Hugo Wolf.

As in his tone poems, so in his songs, Strauss began to write under the influence of Liszt. Liszt,

[1] "Monographien moderner Musiker", Band I.

as Gustav Brecher remarks, "was the creator of the new German *Lied*. He emancipated himself from every form sanctioned *a priori*, and in each case shaped the song in accordance with the spirit of the poem."

He was, we must add, by no means the first to do this; but, more minutely than his predecessors, he interpreted the individual words in a poem, but without sacrificing the melodic contours or *making the musician play second fiddle to the poet.*

When Strauss emancipated himself from the salutary influence of Liszt, he followed in the footsteps of Hugo Wolf, in whose songs the music nearly always does play second fiddle to the poem. Hugo Wolf favored this method because he almost entirely lacked the faculty of creating unique melodies; from the melodic — the highest — point of view, his songs are appallingly arid and uninteresting. That Strauss followed his example was doubtless due largely to his own increasing difficulty in creating melodies. Thus it happens that his earlier songs, like his earlier tone poems, are the best. It is significant that he practically ceased writing songs as long ago as 1905.

That not a few of his songs are of inferior value is admitted even by his apostles and propagandists. It is intimated that when a composer gets two hundred dollars or more for every song he may dash off in a leisure moment, there is a temptation not to wait for inspiration.

Strauss himself has explained in an ingenious way why his songs are of such unequal worth. In 1893, Siegmund von Hausegger sent to prominent composers a request for an explanation of the creative processes in their minds. In his answer Strauss wrote:

For months I have had no desire to compose; presently, one evening, I open a book of poems; I turn over the leaves casually; one of the poems arrests my attention, and in many cases, before I have read it over carefully, a musical idea comes to me. I sit down and in ten minutes the complete song is done.

If at such a moment, when the cup is full to the brim, I happen on a poem which approximately corresponds with the musical idea that has come to me, the new opus is ready in a moment. But if — as unfortunately happens very often — I do not find the right poem, I nevertheless yield to the creative impulse and set to music any random poem that happens to be at all suitable for a musical setting — but the process is slow, the result is artificial, the melody has a viscid flow, and I have to draw on all my command of technical resources in order to achieve something that will stand the test of strict self-criticism. All this happens because at the decisive moment the steel does not meet the flint, because the musical idea which — God only knows why — had come into my head, failed to find the corresponding poetic thought, and now has to be reshaped and altered to be at all available. Under these circumstances why do I not prefer to write my own poems? That would be the right thing to do. But in my case the word-poet and the tone-poet are not in such immediate correspondence, the tone-poet being in technical skill and routine too far ahead of the word-poet.

It would hardly be worth while to attempt to characterize, however briefly, all of the Strauss *Lieder*, good, bad, or indifferent; it is so much more satisfactory to look them over and decide for yourself, especially as opinions of their merits differ so widely. A glance at the most important and popular of them must suffice for these pages.

Opus 10 includes eight settings of poems by Herman von Gilm. The most popular of them are *Zueignung*, an effective song, with a telling climax, though the melody is commonplace; and *Allerseelen*, which is

quite Brahmsian in style and sentiment, whereas *Die Zeitlose* in its modulations and atmosphere suggests the influence of Liszt.

Opus 15. Five songs to poems by Adolf Friedrich Count von Schack. The best of them are *Madrigal* and *Heimkehr;* but they are not among his happiest inspirations.

Opus 17 includes the music to six more of Count Schack's poems, among them the *Ständchen*, or *Serenade*, which has been sung more frequently than any other of Strauss's lyrics. Reference was made on a previous page to the fact that Strauss has often expressed annoyance at what he considers the excessive popularity of this song as compared with some he values more highly. Nevertheless, with the exception of *Morgen*, the *Serenade* is probably the best (though not the most Straussian) of his songs. In view of its musical charms, neither singers nor audiences care one jot about the composer's rather high-handed declamatory treatment of the text, to which Steinitzer (I, p. 159) calls attention. Other songs in this collection that have their admirers are: *Das Geheimniss*, and *Seitdem dein Aug*.

Opus 19. All the songs thus far commented on belong to the years 1882–1886. In 1887 there appeared six more settings of poems by Count Schack (*Lotosblätter*), among them the world-famed *Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar*, and another that is often sung: *Wie sollten wir geheim sie halten*.

Opus 21. *Schlichte Weisen*, settings of poems by Felix Dahn, includes four prime favorites: *All mein Gedanken, Du meines Herzens Krönelein, Ach weh mir, unglückhaftem Mann*, and *Ach Lieb' ich muss nun scheiden*. This last suggests Robert Franz.

Opus 22. *Mädchenblumen.* Four more Dahn songs. They are not remarkable for musical inspiration, and depend for their effect on the singer's powers of declamation — like so many of Strauss's later songs.

Opus 26 includes settings of two songs by Lenau: *Frühlingsgedränge* and *O, wärst du mein.* Mediocre.

Opus 27. The opinion, somewhat debatable, is often expressed that it was not till he came to his Opus 27, at the age of twenty-eight, that Strauss revealed his best powers as a song writer. We come nearer the truth if we say that, like Schubert, he wrote some of his best and some of his worst songs in years far apart. Nevertheless, Steinitzer had good reasons to write that the *Lieder* included in Opus 27, Opus 29, Opera 31, 32, and 39, "are to most hearers and singers the Strauss songs *par excellence.*"

That *Morgen* is the loveliest of all his songs is an opinion I have already expressed. To be sure it is strikingly Brahmsian, and it is really a piano piece with voice part added; but a gem it is all the same. The poem is by the Scotch-German author, John Henry Mackay, who also supplied the verse for another song included in Opus 27 and much admired: *Heimliche Aufforderung.* Famous also is Number 2 of this opus: *Cäcilie;* this and *Morgen* have been published also in a version with orchestra in place of piano, made by Strauss himself.

Opus 28. Mackay, Henckell, and Hart are three of the modern poets who led Strauss into new realms. Three more of them, Bierbaum, Busse, and Dehmel are represented in Opus 29 and Opus 31. Tremendously popular is Number 1 of Opus 29: *Traum durch dir Dämmerung.*

Opus 31 includes four songs to Busse and Dehmel

verses, the most familiar of which is *Und wärst du mein Weib.*

Opus 32 comprises five songs dedicated to the composer's wife, the sources of the texts being the works of Henckell, Liliencron, and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn.* The best of them is *Ich trage meine Minne.*

Opus 36. With these songs we reach the year 1898; they come, like those of Opus 37, between the tone-poems *Don Quixote* and *Heldenleben.* The poems are by Klopstock and from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn.* From the latter collection is taken *Für fünfzehn Pfennige,* which always amuses audiences. It is in the form of a dialogue between a girl and a clerk who, in wooing her, promises her all sorts of things for a nickel.

Opus 37. In these six numbers Strauss returns to his modern poets. They are, like those of Opus 32, dedicated to his wife, and have their admirers; the best, perhaps, is *Meinem Kinde.*

Opus 39 includes five songs for high voice, among which *Befreit* may be specially named; also the famous *Der Arbeitsmann,* which attained great popularity through the dramatic delivery of Doctor Wüllner, who sang it in a number of cities, with the aid of the composer, who always plays his piano parts with unique effect. In Number 5 of this opus, *Lied an meinen Sohn,* the accompaniment depicting a storm is so difficult that Strauss himself nearly bungled it once in Munich, exclaiming afterwards to a friend: "The devil may play that!"

Three opus numbers, 41, 43, and 46, comprising fifteen songs, belong to the year 1899, just preceding the opera *Feuersnot;* while 1900 and 1901 brought forth seventeen more, in the opus numbers 47, 48, 49. The last group of six songs, Opus 56, belongs to the

year 1905. Not a few of these last songs seem to belong in the category of pot-boilers. Honorable exceptions are *Ich Schwebe*, and *Blindenklage*, *Winterweihe*, and particularly, *Der Steinklopfer*, which is very effective, provided the text is enunciated by a dramatic vocalist like Wüllner.

While Strauss knows very well how to write idiomatically for the piano, nevertheless some of his songs seem to clamor for an orchestral accompaniment. He himself felt this, when he orchestrated the piano parts of eight of his *Lieder: Cäcilie, Morgen, Liebeshymnus, Rosenband, Meinem Kinde, Wiegenlied, Muttertändelei*, and *Weihnachtsidyll*. The *Serenade* was supplied with an orchestral accompaniment by Mottl.

Eight of Strauss's *Lieder* were originally composed with orchestra. They are published under the opus numbers 33, 44, 51. One of the four songs in Opus 33 is a much-admired *Hymne* for baritone; *Dass du mein Auge wecktest*, the words of which are not, as formerly believed, by Schiller. *Pilger's Morgenlied* also exhibits its composer to advantage. The *Notturno* in Opus 44 is dedicated to Anton von Rooy. Concerning the four numbers in this collection, Steinitzer says: "They are available only for a deep male voice, with the possible exception of such phenomenal artists as Ernestine Schumann-Heink or Margarete Matzenauer. With a poet who has rare hours like Richard Dehmel, Strauss, in the first number, penetrates with subtle emotional portrayal to the deepest recesses of the soul." He is equally enthusiastic over the second number, *Nächtlicher Gesang*, in which Rückert's ghostly poem is reflected in the music in a way to "make one shudder in full daylight." The two songs in Opus 51 are for a deep bass voice — the poems by

Uhland and Heine; their names, *Das Tal* and *Der Einsame.*[1]

Choral Works. Under the influence of Brahms, Strauss composed, at the age of twenty, his first published choral work, Opus 14; a setting of Goethe's *Wanderer's Sturmlied.* It lasts fifteen minutes, and is as polyphonic in structure as his orchestral scores. Calling attention to its "stupendous effects of vocal tone", Ernest Newman declares that "in its poetic feeling, its vigor, and its ease of workmanship, it is one of the finest pieces of choral and orchestral writing of the nineteenth century."

Opus 34 contains two anthems in sixteen parts. They harken back to the medieval choruses of Lasso and Caldara, as Mauke notes in his "Meisterführer" devoted to Opus 14, 34, 53 (Schlesinger) which should be consulted by those interested in the performance of Strauss's choral works. They are extremely difficult, but effective if done with virtuosic skill.

Opus 42 and Opus 45 comprise five choruses for male voices. The first is entitled *Love;* the second is an *Old German Battle Hymn.* The third, fourth, and fifth are another *Battlesong; Song of Friendship;* and a *Bridal Dance* dedicated "To my dear father."

In 1906, Peters in Leipzig issued, in two big volumes, a collection of German folk songs (*Volksliederbuch für Männerchor*), compiled by order of the Kaiser, and arranged for male voices by more than forty eminent musicians, among them Richard Strauss, Humperdinck, Max Bruch, Reinecke, Thuille, Roent-

[1] Thirty-six poets are represented in the songs of Strauss. For a complete list of the songs, giving both titles and first lines, see Richard Specht's "Vollständiges Verzeichniss der im Druck erschienenen Werke von Richard Strauss." Number 2756 of the Universal Edition, Vienna and Leipzig.

gen, etc. In looking over Strauss's arrangements — half a dozen in number — one is struck by the fact that even here, where folk-tune simplicity is, or should be, the keynote, Strauss could not suppress his passion for complexity and for being "different." Maybe he reasoned that if he wrote simply, musicians might say "anybody could have done that." So even these arrangements got a Straussian cast. They may be found on pages 192 and 717 of Volume I, and on pages 63, 221, 240, 615, of Volume II. Extremes meet in these arrangements: naïve folk tunes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in an ultra-modern setting. The last of them, *Kuckuck*, is an amusingly realistic cuckoo song.

Opus 52 is a setting of Uhland's ballad, *Taillefer*, for mixed choir, solo voices, and orchestra. It was written for the inauguration of the Stadthalle in Heidelberg and lasts sixteen minutes. It is *al fresco* music of the most massive, sonorous kind, suitable only for large halls. A note in the score calls attention to this, adding: "The chorus must therefore be as large as possible." Together with Liszt's *Dante* Symphony, Bruckner's ninth, and Haydn's *Creation*, this was one of the works chosen by Philipp Wolfrum for testing his theory that musicians should be invisible at performances. For details see page 618 of Müller-Reuter's "Lexikon der Deutschen Konzertliteratur."

Opus 55. *Bardengesang*, for male chorus and orchestra, is characterized by Newman as "magnificently barbaric." This, too, owes its effect largely to massive sonority, variety being secured by dividing the singers into three groups and by means of brass instruments, also in several groups and at varying distance behind the scenes.

Opus 38, *Enoch Arden*, resembles many of the Strauss (and Hugo Wolf) songs in owing its effect on an audience more to the poem than to the music that goes with it. With the famous actor Ernst von Possart, at whose request this melodramatic work was written and who enraptured thousands by the declamation of Tennyson's story, Strauss, as accompanist at the piano, made an extensive tour in 1897–1898. In America, Max Heinrich for some years kept alive more or less interest in this musically insignificant work.

Another melodramatic work is *Das Schloss am Meer* (*The Castle on the Sea Coast*), for declamation with piano accompaniment. The poem is by Uhland.

PART VII

RICHARD STRAUSS IN AMERICA

I

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THEODORE THOMAS

THEODORE Thomas, who did so much to popularize the works of Wagner and Liszt in America, also did pioneer work for Richard Strauss. His catholicity is evinced by the fact that he went often, in Vienna, to hear Johann Strauss conduct his waltzes, so that he might reproduce his best effects at his New York concerts. He was one of the first to see the rising star of Richard Strauss.

Mrs. Thomas, in her fascinating biography of her famous husband (a book which, better than any other, mirrors musical life in America in the half century 1845, when pigs still ran about on Broadway, to 1905), relates how Thomas, while in Europe in 1882, on the lookout, as usual, for novelties for his programs, had met in Munich "a young and almost unknown composer, one Richard Strauss, who had recently finished writing a symphony. Thomas secured the first movement of the work, and was so much impressed with it that he requested young Strauss to let him have the other movements, promising to bring out the whole work in a concert of the Philharmonic Society." On September 20, 1883, Strauss in reply, sent him this letter:

Highly Honored Sir:

As I was unfortunately unable to welcome you here this Summer — having only learned of your presence in Munich

from Mr. Lockwood on the eve of your departure — I must not neglect to express to you in writing my heartiest and warmest thanks for your kind intention to give my second symphony the great honor of a New York performance. My father also wishes to be remembered to you, and joins me in thanking you in advance.

According to your request I have had the score of the three movements not already known to you written out, and also single parts of the string quartet, and have already corrected them. I must ask you to kindly paste the two inclosed changes in the Scherzo into your score. I have made these changes for harmonic reasons, in order to avoid the too strong predominance of the C minor key in the A flat major Scherzo. The number of measures is indicated on the back of the slip. In the parts the changes have already been made.

Thanking you again most sincerely, and begging you to remember me to your family, I remain, with the highest esteem,

Your ever grateful,
Richard Strauss.

It was on December 13, 1884, that Thomas first produced this symphony. He did not have time to write to the composer at once about its favorable reception by the audience, but somebody mailed a very unfavorable criticism of it to Strauss, who was so much distressed by it that he wrote to Thomas:

To-day, for the first time, I got some sign of life from the performance of my symphony in New York, in, it must be confessed, a very bad criticism of my work from I do not know what paper. This, combined with your absolute silence in regard to the performance, points to the certainty that my work has made a fiasco in New York. This, however, will not prevent me from expressing to you, much honored sir, my fullest, deepest, and most hearty thanks that you had the extraordinary goodness to present my symphony to the New York public. It is principally on your account that I deplore the non-success of the work, and regret that your remarkable kindness was not rewarded

CHARLOTTENBURG, DEN 29. Nov. 1903

~~KNESEBECKSTR. 20.~~ Joachimsthalerstr. 17

Sehr verehrter Herr Thomas!

Herzlichsten Dank für Ihren so sehr liebenswürdigen Brief, der mich ausserordentlich gefreut hat.

Ich bin mit Ihren Programmvorschlägen, auch Zarathustra vollkommen einverstanden.

Auf frohes Wiedersehen!

Herzlichst grüßend

Ihr in größter Hochachtung

dankbar ergebenster

Dr Richard Strauss

Das Programm meiner Frau verfügt über zwei verschiedene Nummern von je 3 bis 4 Gesängen mit Orchester (die Orchesterbegleitung ist Manuscript, die Noten bringe ich mit) u. Klavierlieder in beliebiger Anzahl.

FACSIMILE OF LETTER TO THEODORE THOMAS

by the applause of the critics. I console myself for the failure of my symphony with the critics and public, with the thought that the judgment of the musicians was favorable to me (which I care most for) and especially that you, most honored sir, considered my work worthy of production in your concerts. It would be very friendly if you would write me a few lines giving me your own judgment of the performance, and your exact opinion of my work, adding, perhaps, a few criticisms of it! At the same time, I beg of you to express my sincere thanks to your orchestra, and believe me always gratefully

Your devoted
Richard Strauss.

Thomas complied with this request, sending him a message concerning which Strauss wrote once more, under date of April 12, 1885:

The joy your delightful letter gave to me and mine you can scarcely conceive; it was one of the most beautiful and happiest surprises that I could possibly have had. . . . The criticisms I had received of it were not of a nature to allow me to indulge in the hope of success, taken as the only ones. With one exception they were all so ordinary and superficial that they pointed to failure rather than success. That the latter was the case rejoices my heart, especially on your account, as it was a dreadful thought to me that my work might have brought discredit on you. . . . Your kind offer to conduct my next orchestral work in New York I accept with the most cordial thanks, and will surely avail myself of it.

In the summer of 1887 Thomas got another letter from Strauss, offering him the *Italian Fantasy:*

When you were so kind, two years ago, as to write me in regard to the performance of my F minor symphony, you were good enough to hold out to me the promise that you would bring out in the Western world another orchestral work of mine. A second composition of this kind is to be published in October, score and parts; it is a symphonic Fantasie in four movements:

I. The Campagna (*Lento*).
II. The Ruins of Rome (*Allegro con brio*).
III. On the Strand of Sorrento (*Andante*).
IV. Neapolitan Folk Life (*Allegro vivace*).

Would you permit me to ask, encouraged by your friendly offer, whether I might venture to hope that the work might be given under your direction in New York?

I myself conducted the first performance of it here in Munich, March 1, and achieved a fine success, although a not altogether uncontested one. The Fantasie offers an especial freedom of form, entirely new and unusual, and it would naturally be viewed with hostility by the old musicians who were brought here to fill positions as functionaries. As to the technical part of the work, it belongs to the most difficult which the modern school of music has produced, and we have very few orchestras here which could cope with it, especially the last movement. Few concert organizations have great orchestras and conductors of genius who can grasp the intellectual contents of a work, such as the New York Philharmonic Society, which, under your leadership, stands in the first rank. It is therefore all the more important for me that the Philharmonic Society should not refuse my Italian Fantasie.

Under these circumstances, honored sir, you will readily understand how cheerfully I recalled your very kind promise of two years ago. Bülow has accepted it for his concerts in Berlin and Hamburg next season, and has expressed himself most strongly in its favor. It is not quite so long as the F minor symphony. With the latter I have had prodigious luck, and it has now been played eleven times. . . .

You are already aware that I have been for the last two years conductor at the Hof Theatre here. I like the position very much, as it allows me time for my composition.

His request, it is needless to say, was granted. Thomas brought out the new work the following March. He was the first, too, to introduce to an American audience some of the later and more important of Strauss's tone poems.

II

STRAUSS FESTIVAL IN NEW YORK

In February, 1904, Strauss crossed the Atlantic to take part in four festival concerts given in his honor by the Wetzler Symphony Orchestra, an organization under the direction of Hermann Hans Wetzler, who had the support of a millionaire. These concerts were given on February 27, March 3, 9, 21. Wetzler himself led the opening number, *Zarathustra*, while Strauss conducted his *Heldenleben*. The vocal soloist was David Bispham, who sang *Die Ulme zur Hirsau*, *Nachtgang*, and *Lied des Steinklopfers*.

At the second concert, Wetzler conducted *Don Juan*, and Strauss himself *Don Quixote* and *Death and Transfiguration*, besides four of his songs with orchestra; *Rosenband*, *Liebeshymnus*, *Morgen*, and *Cäcilie*, the vocalist being his wife, Frau Strauss-de-Ahna.

Frau Strauss was also the soloist at the third concert, her songs being *Meinem Kinde*, *Muttertändelei*, *Wiegenlied* (these three with orchestra) and the following four with piano: *Allerseelen*, *Befreit*, *Süsser Mai*, *Kling*. The orchestral numbers were *Don Quixote* and *Eulenspiegel*, under the composer's direction.

The biggest trump was reserved for the final concert: the first performance anywhere of the *Sinfonia Domestica*, under Strauss, who also conducted *Don Juan* and *Zarathustra*. No soloist.

It is interesting to note that of the fourteen songs given at these concerts, seven were with orchestra. All of the fourteen were well calculated to give the audiences a favorable impression of his gifts as a songwriter. The *Serenade* is conspicuously absent.

It cannot be said that this festival was a brilliant success, notwithstanding the coöperation of the composer and his wife. The press for the most part was hostile; so much so that when, a little later, Strauss came across a faultfinder in Chicago, he asked: "Are you perhaps from New York?"

No doubt, some of us did not appreciate at its full value the opportunity to hear Strauss conduct seven of his principal works. Whatever one may think of their value, he certainly conducted them with a brilliant virtuosity no one else has equalled in them. The orchestra, though not the best in New York, was a good one; yet fifteen rehearsals of the *Domestica* were held before the composer was satisfied.

Now began a chase which must have severely tried the vitality of Strauss, used though he was to such exertions. In a month he gave twenty-one concerts in different cities, with nearly as many orchestras. Altogether, his tour (with his wife) comprised thirty-five concerts and nearly as many dinners in their honor. They were happiest in Chicago, for there Theodore Thomas gave them a royal welcome. Four months before they had left Europe for this tour, Thomas had invited them to come to Chicago. In his reply, dated October 18, 1903, Strauss said: "In thanking you for your charming invitation, I take pleasure in appointing April 1 and 2 as the dates when I shall make the personal acquaintance of your famous orchestra. How happy I shall be, after twenty years, to take you, who were the first to make my works known in America, by the hand, and to thank you for all that you have done for my art since I had the pleasure, in my old home, to play for you my F minor Symphony at that time."

In his reply, Thomas said: "It will be an ever memorable satisfaction to both myself and the orchestra to show to the greatest musician now living and one of the greatest pioneers of all times, our love and respect for his genius and knowledge. The name of Richard Strauss is one to conjure with in our audience, and I am delighted, dear sir, that during your visit you will find yourself surrounded by friends and admirers here."

Before Strauss arrived in Chicago, Thomas prepared the program thoroughly, the result being that the composer saw no need for more than one rehearsal under his own bâton. At its close he made the following address, as recorded by Mrs. Thomas:

Gentlemen: I came here in the pleasant expectation of finding a superior orchestra, but you have far surpassed my expectations, and I can say to you that I am delighted to know you as an orchestra of artists in whom beauty of tone, technical perfection, and discipline are found in the highest degree. I know that this is due to your, by me, most highly revered *Meister*, Theodore Thomas, whom I have known for twenty years, and whom it gives me inexpressible pleasure to meet again here in his own workroom. Gentlemen, such a rehearsal as that which we have held this morning is no labor, but a great pleasure, and I thank you all for the hearty good-will you have shown towards me.

When the concert came, Mrs. Thomas relates, the Auditorium was crowded from floor to ceiling with thousands of music lovers, and as Thomas led the great composer on to the stage, this vast concourse of people rose to their feet, cheering and applauding, while the orchestra blazoned forth a rousing *tusch* of welcome. It was a splendid tribute of appreciation, and naturally inspired Strauss to his best effort. No one who had the good fortune to hear that concert will ever forget the exquisite beauty of the whole performance.

III

THE WANAMAKER EPISODE

An interesting episode occurred on Strauss's return to New York. On April 16 and 18 he gave two afternoon concerts at John Wanamaker's for which he was paid one thousand dollars. His enemies, both in America and Europe, made a great ado over this, declaring it little short of scandalous that a musician of his rank should appear at a department-store concert. The Berlin *Signale* was particularly incensed at this affront to the majesty of art.

To those familiar with the facts, this storm in a teakettle was amusing. Before accepting this offer, Strauss had satisfied himself that the Wanamaker Auditorium provided opportunity for high-class performances and was, in every way, just as respectable a place for a musician to appear in as Carnegie Hall or the Metropolitan Opera House.

John Wanamaker is a merchant prince who has spent hundreds of thousands in New York and Philadelphia in providing free musical entertainment for his customers or any one else who chooses to attend his daily entertainments. These concerts are of course given for advertising purposes, but is advertising a crime? Do not musicians advertise as well as merchants? High-class artists appear at many of these concerts, which are heard annually by more than a quarter of a million persons, among whom they spread a love and understanding of music. Opportunities are provided for young artists to get before the public, and for a number of years these entertainments have been under the management of a favorably known American com-

poser, Alexander Russell, now also Professor of Music at Princeton University. Surely there was no reason why Strauss should have refused the chance to add an honest one thousand dollars to his bank account. As he remarked in a contribution concerning this matter to the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* (April 20, 1904): "True art ennobles any hall, and earning money in a decent way for wife and child is no disgrace — even for an artist."

IV

SALOME BANISHED

A much more violent tempest was that which arose in 1907 and swept *Salome* from the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. In the history of that famous institution this is a unique episode.

Heinrich Conried was at that time manager of the Metropolitan. He knew of the tremendous success of *Salome* abroad, a success which caused it to be performed in three years in more than fifty European cities. Surely, he reasoned, it would provide a profitable sensation for New York too.

Some amusing references to his correspondence with Strauss are included in the "Life of Conried" by Montrose J. Moses. In a letter to Geraldine Farrar, Conried said: "In case I should come to terms with Richard Strauss — he asks at present ridiculously high terms — I would be much obliged to have you create *Salome*, which will very likely be done about the middle of February."

A few days later he wrote again to ask Miss Farrar if she was willing to sing Butterfly. "It seems," he added, "I cannot come to terms with

Strauss about *Salome*. He wants the earth and a small piece besides."

Miss Farrar having the good sense to see that such a part would not improve her voice, Conried sounded other singers. Then he wrote to Strauss, to make him understand that his claims were excessive.

> I am willing, he declared, to pay you the highest author's royalty that I can give you, provided you yourself direct the first performance. I am willing to grant you an evening's salary of $500 — a salary which has never been paid an opera director anywhere in the world. . . . You want five *Salome* performances for the second season, with an evening's salary of $750. If you direct a performance in the second year, perhaps it will be worth that, in case *Salome* is a success the first year — which you take for granted and which I most sincerely wish. If, however, my audiences, despite all the greatness of your work, dislike the opera, in what a situation would I find myself then?

When, finally, satisfactory arrangements had been made, Conried became so interested in the outcome that, as his biographer relates, some of the rehearsals were conducted at his bedside when he was ill. Already the papers were printing cartoons, and articles for and against, and Conried was also denounced in some of the pulpits. As a rival manager remarked to him: "Lucky man! Your show advertises itself!"

On January 22, 1907, the first performance was given, under the masterly direction of Alfred Hertz, and with a cast including Fremstad as Salome, Burrian as Herod, Van Rooy as Jokanaan, Andreas Dippel as Narraboth, Albert Reiss as the First Jew, Adolf Mühlmann as First Soldier. It was given outside the subscription, and the receipts exceeded $22,000, which went into the manager's pocket, as this was his annual "benefit night."

The impression the opera made on the audience was thus described by W. P. Eaton in the *Tribune:* "Many voices were hushed as the crowd passed out into the night, many faces were white almost as those at the rail of a ship. Many women were silent, and men spoke as if a bad dream were on them. . . . The grip of a strange horror or disgust was on the majority. It was significant that the usual applause was lacking. It was scattered and brief." Mr. Krehbiel added to this remark that "a large proportion of the audience left the audience-room at the beginning of the bestial apostrophe to the head of the Baptist."

Two days after the first performance, the Directors of the Metropolitan Opera and Real Estate Company requested Mr. Conried to withdraw *Salome*, under Section 3 of the lease of the house. The resolutions sent to him declared that the Directors "consider that the performance of *Salome* is objectionable and detrimental to the best interests of the Metropolitan Opera House. They therefore protest against any repetition of this opera."

In a long reply, Conried called attention to the facts that *Salome* was being performed everywhere in Europe; that it was acknowledged a musical masterwork, "probably the greatest which musical genius has produced in this generation"; that most people go to an opera for the music and not the libretto; that in *Salome* the only religious personage is John the Baptist, who is "treated with dignity and reverence"; that the bringing of the head upon the stage followed all European precedent, but that he had arranged that, in future performances, "it should be entirely hidden from the view of the audience; that he had received letters from many persons, among

them several clergymen, who expressed admiration of this work."

Some of the directors supported Conried's plea, but the majority-vote was adverse, and *Salome* was banished from the sacred precincts of the Metropolitan Opera House, J. Pierpont Morgan paying the loss resulting from this action.

A few performances of *Salome* in some other theater were planned by Conried, but presently he dropped that project, and the opera was heard no more till Hammerstein revived it.

New York was by no means the only city that objected to this opera. Some of its details, as previously noted, had to be modified before the Royal Opera in Berlin accepted it. In London, Salome had to deliver her apostrophe to a tray that had no head in it; and it was said that only the Queen's interference prevented the censor from forbidding the opera altogether.

V

ANECDOTES FROM ALFRED HERTZ

To Alfred Hertz, who so ably conducted the opera at the Metropolitan, I owe a few anecdotes relating to it. One of them he got from Rudolf Berger, who sang the part of Jokanaan at the hundredth performance of this opera in Berlin.

Berger was always very much annoyed that during his most beautiful passage, which he has to sing down in the well, Herodias sings on the stage in an absolutely different key, and, as he put it, spoiled his beautiful cantilena; so he asked Strauss before that performance if he would not allow him for once to sing this passage

alone. Strauss thought it over for a moment and then he said: "I really think I have irritated the public often enough with this awkward passage of Herodias, so we might leave it out to-day." Berger was delighted and did his best to sing his passage better than ever. After the performance, he went beaming up to Strauss and said: "Wasn't it much nicer?" But Strauss answered: "Maybe you liked it better, but we will do it the old way hereafter all the same."

At a rehearsal for wind instruments alone, held by Hertz at the Metropolitan, the players had to stop during the scene of the Jews "because of the funny noises the muted brass was making. The players laughed so much over them that I had to wait quite a few minutes before we all could go on again. At the first rehearsals many, especially the older members of the orchestra, were seriously bothered by the terrific difficulties which, as some of the musicians put it, Strauss evidently wrote 'only to annoy the musicians'; but soon afterwards the orchestra became most enthusiastic, and felt really worse about the discontinuance of the performance than the artists."

Occasionally Strauss, in orchestrating his music, writes for the violins notes lower than the lowest they can play (G), without giving them time to tune down to them. "I asked him his reason for doing so," says Hertz, "in view of the fact that it was impossible to play those notes. 'Well,' he answered, 'it is impossible to-day, but who knows but that in the future someone will make violins which will make these notes possible.' Funny enough, a year later, at an exposition of musical instruments in Vienna, a violin was exhibited which had, in addition to the usual four strings, a low C string on which all of these passages would have

been easy to play. For reasons unknown to me, these instruments have not been introduced in any orchestra, so far as I know."

VI

HAMMERSTEIN TO THE RESCUE

That Heinrich Conried was right in his belief that *Salome*, if he could produce it in some other theater, would attract the masses, was shown when Oscar Hammerstein included this noisome work in his repertory during his third season at the Manhattan Opera House (1908–1909). The five successes of that season (strange assortment) were Donizetti's *Lucia*, Massenet's *Thaïs* and *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, each of which had seven performances, and Strauss's *Salome*, which had no fewer than ten.

Encouraged by the favorable reception of *Salome*, Hammerstein added its successor, *Elektra*, to his repertory, on February 1, 1910 — somewhat late in the season; but it still achieved seven representations, under the direction of De la Fuente, with a cast including Mariette Mazarin as Elektra, Alice Baron as Chrysosthemis, Gerville-Reache as Klytemnestra, Duffault as Aegisthus and Huberdeau as Orestes.

Two days previous to the *première*, Hammerstein expressed the fear that he had made a mistake in asking double the usual prices for seats; but when the hour arrived for the curtain to rise, the auditorium was crowded. There were evidently not a few Straussites in the assemblage, and when the curtain fell, the applause was loud and prolonged, so that Hammer-

MARY GARDEN AS SALOME

MARGARETHE OBER AS THE ROSENKAVALIER

stein had reason to cable to the composer that *Elektra* had proved a success in the new world.

In a letter to the Glasgow *Herald* I said, in summing up the situation, that for the lack of praise from the New York critics when the Strauss Festival was held, and the insult when *Salome* was banished, which rankled deeply in his breast, Strauss "had his revenge when, some time later, the German Liederkranz asked him to contribute a few lines for its Goethe Festival Album. He took the occasion to accuse Americans of lack of talent, inability to appreciate real art, and 'hypocrisy, the most loathsome of all vices.'

"But lo, and behold! When Oscar Hammerstein, last season, produced *Salome*, these same untalented, unappreciative, and loathsome hypocrites crowded the Manhattan Opera House ten times, making the Strauss opera the success of the year!

"When *Elektra* had its sensational *première* in Dresden, the same Oscar Hammerstein, as a matter of course, promptly applied for permission to produce it at the Manhattan. Strauss not only complied, but, to show his gratitude for the missionary work Mr. Hammerstein had done, he charged him only $10,000 for the American rights of performance and a trifle of $18,000 in advance royalties."

In business matters, too, Strauss is a virtuoso!

VII

COMIC OPERA AND BALLET

New York had to wait three years to hear the first performance of Strauss's most successful opera, *Der Rosenkavalier*. No doubt it would have been pro-

duced sooner had Hammerstein, who had fared well with *Salome* and *Elektra*, remained an impresario. But in 1910 he was persuaded to leave this field (for a liberal sum) by the directors of the Metropolitan, who had found him an inconvenient rival and thorn — the occasion of odious comparisons with their own doings, especially in the realm of French opera.

These directors had no desire to take over from Hammerstein the *Elektra* score, or to revive *Salome*. After the production of *Ariadne* in Stuttgart, however, they showed a disposition to reopen negotiations with its composer. When it became evident that *Ariadne* was not a success, even in Germany, this plan was abandoned, and the *Rosenkavalier* was chosen instead. This comic opera, to be sure, had been hissed in Milan, but in the cities of Germany it had a sensational and an enduring success. In London, too, it proved, for a time, a huge box-office success. So it was staged at the Metropolitan in 1914, and retained its hold on the public for several seasons, aided by big casts and considerable pruning and toning down of its coarse dialogue. Its first conductor in New York was Alfred Hertz; its second, Arthur Bodanzky.

On November 25, 1916, Strauss once more had his name on a Metropolitan program, this time, however, only as editor — editor of Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which on this occasion probably had its first hearing in America, though one hundred and thirty-seven years old. Doubtless it would not have been heard even then had not Strauss, a quarter of a century previously, undertaken to modernize it to some extent. In doing this, he followed the example of Wagner, who, when he was conductor of the Royal Opera in Dresden, brought out a revised version of Gluck's

Iphigenia in Aulis, which, though sixty-six years old, had never been heard in that city. Its success was so pronounced that Liszt, who at that time conducted the opera in Weimar, begged him to make similar arrangements of Gluck's *Alceste*, *Orpheus*, *Armide*, and *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

The Dresden critics, on the other hand, who never approved of anything Wagner did, pronounced his labors "a waste of time and trouble"; and his French biographer, Adolph Jullien, took the narrow, conservative stand that Gluck's operas were not so antiquated that they needed retouching. Wagner's most impassioned foe, Doctor Hanslick, for once showed commonsense when he wrote that "a critic conveys to the reader a greater sense of his own importance if he wails over the omission of every little note as an irreparable loss. But a truer friend and benefactor of Gluck is he who, by sacrificing a few minor details, helps one of his operas to success, than those purists who, from their classical heights, would rather look down on its failure." Wagner's additions in the last act Hanslick pronounced "masterly traits, which enormously increase the dramatic effect without asserting themselves too independently."

Precisely the same thing may be said of Strauss's version of the other *Iphigenia*. With his aid, the last act of this opera has been made one of the most thrillingly dramatic and pathetic scenes ever heard in an opera house; a scene unsurpassed by any opera composer from Mozart to Wagner. It made one forgive the dreariness, monotony, and effeteness of much that preceded it, and we may thank Mr. Bodanzky for providing this tremendous treat for the Metropolitan's audiences.

The first performance of Gluck's opera in this version was given at Weimar. Strauss on that occasion translated the French text into German with such disregard of the original accents that even his warmest champions, among them Max Steinitzer, rebelled. But concerning the musical additions and certain transpositions in the score, there can hardly be a difference of opinion. If Gluck's last but one — and generally considered his greatest — work is to be included in the modern operatic repertory it can only be in Richard Strauss's version. He has done for this opera what Liszt wanted Wagner to do for it; and he has done it in the Wagnerian spirit of reverence for the original, combined with a desire to make it impress modern audiences as it did those of thirteen decades ago.

Strauss did well to enrich the orchestration here and there, for Gluck's colors now seem somewhat anemic. He compressed the last two acts into one act of two scenes; he omitted some of the recitatives and transferred an air sung by Iphigenia from the early part of the first act to its close; replaced the final air of Orestes by a trio, and made a few more minor changes. His masterstroke is at the end, where he has taken an air of Orestes as a basis for a trio, which is merged with the chorus, and enriched by a fullness of orchestration that would have astonished Gluck as much as it certainly would have delighted him. This refers to the whole of the final scene, which, as before stated, is one of the most overwhelmingly pathetic climaxes in all dramatic art; the scene where Iphigenia, as Priestess of Diana, is about to dispatch the garlanded prisoner, when she discovers at the last moment that he is her brother Orestes, and throws

herself into his arms. This, with the anger of the King, who condemns them both to death, and the rescue by a force of Greeks, makes a thrilling ending of the opera.

Once more, on October 23, 1916, a Strauss work had its first performance in New York — the first, in fact, anywhere.

While Nijinsky, of the Ballet Russe, was a prisoner of war in Austria, he conceived the plan of turning the orchestral humoresque *Till Eulenspiegel* into a pantomimic ballet. It has been previously noted that Strauss at first intended to make the Eulenspiegel story the basis of an opera. Luckily he changed his mind, for a series of operatic pranks lasting four hours would hardly have been as enjoyable as a tone poem lasting only eighteen minutes. However, the fact that Strauss had in mind an operatic plot, and that, in producing his *Josefs Legende* he collaborated with the Ballet Russe in producing a ballet, makes it easy to believe that he was entirely in sympathy with the plan of combining a scenic background and pantomime with his *Till* music, as presented at the Manhattan Opera House.

The venture was a complete success. The fantastic scenery and costumes were designed in Bakstian fashion by Robert E. Jones, and Mr. Nijinsky's choreographic details went very well with the music, which calls for almost as rapid changes as a moving-picture film. The pranks and practical jokes of Eulenspiegel were cleverly acted by Nijinsky and his associates, who duly brought out the fun of the upsetting of things in the market place, the courting scene, the episode with the philosophers, and finally the tragedy of the gallows, which was most picturesque and duly gruesome.

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GERMAN

MAX STEINITZER'S "Richard Strauss", published by Schuster and Loeffler (Berlin, 1911) is not only by far the most important book on Strauss up to date but is likely to remain the most valuable of all works on this composer. Its author has been a friend of Strauss ever since childhood; he has followed his career with sympathy and yet critically; he has been indefatigable in collecting material; and he has had the advantage of being able to make extracts from letters to and by Strauss which have not yet been issued otherwise in book form.

There are two editions of Steinitzer's biography. The second, published in 1914, is a book intended for those who, while reading about Strauss and his works, do not wish to have their attention distracted by references, esthetic disputations, footnotes, and other scholarly digressions. But for journalists and all others who want information about Strauss for literary purposes, the first edition is far more valuable, because of these very scholarly digressions and references. There are special chapters on Strauss "As a Rogue", "As a Decadent", "As an Artist", "As a Man of Business", "As a Butt of Criticism", etc., etc. Fortunately, for the special benefit of literary folk, the publishers have not allowed the second edition to entirely supplant the first, which is still kept in stock.

Steinitzer is also the author of other books which deal with Strauss: "Musikalische Strafpredigten"; "Straussiana"; and "Musikgeschichtlicher Atlas." Breitkopf and Härtel published in 1914 a short book (64 pages) on Strauss by the same writer, which is a good bird's-eye view of his life.

Arthur Seidl is another personal friend of Strauss who has contributed valuable information and comment, in his "Straussiana", and in a brochure of thirty-eight pages, in collaboration with Wilhelm Klatte.

Richard Batka's "Persönlichkeiten" (Heft 16) contains, besides comments, interesting biographic data.

Hans von Bülow's "Briefe", Volumes 6 and 7, include spicy references to Strauss.

Leopold Schmidt, in "Monographien Moderner Musiker", has a chapter on Richard Strauss; also in "Aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart", to which Strauss himself contributed a preface; Schmidt also wrote guides to *Ariadne* and the *Legend of Joseph.*

Eugen Schmitz's "Richard Strauss als Musikdramatiker" and Erich Urban's "Strauss contra Wagner" are concerned with the operas chiefly.

Entirely or partly concerned with Strauss are Gustav Brecher's "Richard Strauss"; Robert Louis's "Das Musikdrama der Gegenwart"; Oscar Bie's "Die Kultur"; Adolf Weissmann's "Berlin als Musikstadt"; Perfall's "Geschichte der Königlichen Theater in München"; Hausegger's "Alexander Ritter" and "Aus dem Jenseits des Künstlers"; Oscar Bie's "Die Moderne Musik und Richard Strauss." Heft 8, 1905, of "Die Musik" (Berlin: Schuster and Loeffler) is devoted chiefly to Strauss. Much valuable information regarding first performances, etc., may be found in Müller-Reuter's "Lexikon der deutschen Konzert-literatur."

"Richard Strauss-Woche, München", 1910 (Emil Gutmann), is a festival program book which includes lists of his works and bibliographic data.

Eduard Hanslick's books: "Fünf Jahre Musik", "Am Ende des Jahrhunderts", and "Aus Neuer und Neuester Zeit", include crushing articles on some of the symphonic poems. They were printed originally in the *Neue Freie Presse*, of Vienna, which contained also, on January 12, 1909, Strauss's personal reminiscences of Hans von Bülow, a valuable biographic document.

No attempt, apparently, has been made to catalogue the countless articles on Strauss in German newspapers and magazines. If reprinted in book form they would fill many dozens of volumes. The names of prominent critics who have written for or against Strauss may be found in the first edition of Steinitzer, page 127. Prominent among the opponents has been the editor of the *Signale*, August Spanuth, whose resentment is probably due largely to the fact that idolaters have claimed so much for Strauss that really belongs to Liszt. He is thus in the same boat with the writer of this American book on Strauss.

Thematic guides and analyses of the tone poems and operas of Strauss are referred to in their proper places in this volume. A list of them may be found in Number 2756 of the Universal Edition (Aktiengesellschaft, Wien, Leipzig), page 36.

A Strauss chronology and complete list of his compositions (up to 1910) is included in this same number of the Universal Edition, which is edited by Richard Specht. It catalogues all the songs in alphabetical as well as chronological order, and, under the names of the tone poems and operas, lists are given of

the arrangements for various instruments. It is an invaluable document and costs only twenty-five cents.

ENGLISH

In English the only volume up to date on Strauss is the excellent little monograph of one hundred and forty-four pages by Ernest Newman, which, unfortunately, was published (by John Lane) before *Elektra* and the works following it had been produced. It includes a biographic sketch by Alfred Kalish. See also Newman's "Musical Studies."

The list of English books which have noteworthy chapters or articles on Strauss includes E. A. Bauhan's "Music and Musicians"; F. Niecks's "Programme Music"; Fuller Maitland's "Masters of German Music"; Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians"; Streatfield's "Modern Music and Musicians."

American books concerned in part with Strauss are Gilman's "Phases of Modern Music"; "Aspects of Modern Opera"; "Nature in Music"; and a Guide to *Salome;* James Huneker's "Overtones" and "Mezzotints in Modern Music"; H. E. Krehbiel's "Chapters of Opera"; W. J. Henderson's "Modern Musical Drift"; J. K. Paine's "Famous Composers"; Arthur Elson's "Modern Composers of Europe"; L. A. Coerne's "Evolution of Modern Orchestration"; Gustav Kobbé's "How to Appreciate Music."

A Bibliography of Straussiana may be found in *The Musician* (Oliver Ditson Company) of February, 1910.

Invaluable to students of Strauss is "Modern Music and Drama" (The Boston Book Company), two volumes dated 1911 and 1915, which contain references

to several hundred articles on Strauss in American and English magazines and newspapers. There are separate lists for the operas, from *Guntram* to *Ariadne*.

Mention may also be made here of a few French authors whose chapters on Strauss have been translated into English: Romain Rolland ("Musicians of To-day"); M. Marnold (See "Music", Volumes 22 and 23); and Albert Lavignac ("Music and Musicians").

INDEX

A

A Hero's Life, 126, 197–203.
Abell, A. M., 265, 269, 271.
Aldrich, R., 207.
Alpensymphonie, 212–218.
America: Strauss in, 59, 297–315; praised by him, 62; invited to return to, 72; letters to Theodore Thomas, 297; Strauss festival and first performance anywhere of the *Sinfonia Domestica*, 301; Wanamaker episode, 304; abused by him, 311; *Salome* and *Elektra* in, 310–311; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 312; *Till Eulenspiegel* as ballet, 315.
Anecdotes: Brahms's father and his double bass, 6; von Bülow and Strauss's father, 13; "like a lioness", 20; "before I die", 27; Strauss on his sickbed, 56; interviews, 57–65; "a musical Buddha", 69; in quest of a song, 69; making his guests pay, 71; "frivolous conduct", 73; Schönberg and Hegel, 106; the prince and the trombones, 115; Wagner as a borrower from Liszt, 124; spoiling a white vest, 125; "you are welcome to them", 127; "a Lisztite, too", 133; "ugly dogs", 133; Mozart and the clarinetist, 141; scared by the thunder machine, 217; drowning the voice, 250; animals on the stage, 250; irritating the public, 310.
Apthorp, W. F., 171, 174.
Ariadne auf Naxos, 39, 66, 264–272.
Armstrong, W., 57.
Arrangements, 262, 292, 320.
Art for art's sake, 116.
Aus Italien, 17, 22, 23, 151–154, 299.

B

Bach, 111, 116–117.
Ballet Russe, 40, 274, 315.
Batka, R., 188, 190, 196, 232, 234, 318.
Baughan, E. A., xii, 196, 320.
Bayreuth festivals, 3, 11, 57.
Beecham, T., 251.
Beethoven, 59, 78, 79, 99, 109, 111, 117, 140.
Berlin, 31, 33, 63, 213, 239, 244, 271.
Berlioz, 78, 81, 109, 110, 113, 114, 135, 139, 141, 153, 166.
Bibliography, xv, 317–321.
Bizet, 139, 182.
Boston Symphony Orchestra, 130.
Brahms, 9, 16, 18, 99, 102, 116, 146, 148, 149, 156, 239, 243.
Bülow, H. von, 3, 12–19, 25, 44, 100, 148, 149, 154, 157, 160, 318.
Burlesks, 19, 150.

C

Cacophony, 123, 126, 127, 160.
Chamber music, 146–151.
Chicago, 302.
Chopin, 124, 145.
Choral works, 292.
Clarinet family, future of, 137.
Colorature, 269.
Composers, exploited, 51.
Conductors, 52–56, 128–132.
Conried, H., 305–308.
Corder, F., 107.

D

Damrosch, L., 130.
De Ahna, Pauline. *See* Strauss, Pauline.
Death and Transfiguration, 168–173.
Debussy, 119, 123, 125.

Don Juan, 24, 158, 162–168.
Don Quixote, 190–197.
Downes, O., 131.
Dresden, 255.
Dukas, P., 216.
Dvořák, 116, 135, 148, 206.

E

Elektra, xiii, 244–254, 310.
Elgar, 49.
Elson, A., 318.
Emotions, expression of, by means of instruments, 136–141.
England and Strauss, 33. *See* London.
Enoch Arden, 291.
Étude, The, 57.
Evening Post, New York, 120, 161, 203, 219, 259, 269.

F

Farrar, Geraldine, 303–304.
Faust, Liszt's, 131.
Festival Prelude, 218.
Feuersnot, 227–234.
Floersheim, O., 189.
Folk-song arrangements, 292.
Form, musical, 92, 97, 98, 116–117.
Friedheim, A., 133.
From Italy. *See* Aus Italien.

G

Gilman, L., 81, 168, 240, 241, 320.
Gluck, 34, 111, 312.
Grainger, Percy, xv; an estimate of Strauss, xvii–xxv.
Grieg, xv, xxiv, 51, 54, 111, 234.
Guntram, 28, 30, 223–227.

H

Hale, P., 131, 173, 208.
Hammerstein, Oscar, 244, 310.
Handel, 111, 122.
Hanslick, E., 167, 178, 181, 198, 313, 319.
Heckelphone, 113.
Henderson, W. J., 320.
Hertz, A., 306, 308, 312.
Hervey, A., 118.
Hofmannsthal, H., 256, 265, 266.
Horn, French, 138–141.
Humiston, W. H., 215.
Humperdinck, 48.
Huneker, J., xiii, 66, 118, 190, 199, 320.

I

Invention. *See* Melody.
Italian Fantasy. *See* Aus Italien.
Italy, 21, 152.

J

Jacob, O. P., 266, 268.
Josefs-Legende, 273–280.

K

Kaiser Wilhelm II, 34, 48.
Kalish, A., 49, 69, 252, 320.
Karpath, L., 63.
Kelley, E. S., 215.
Kobbé, G., 318.
Krehbiel, H. E., 174, 242, 307, 320.

L

Lavignac, A., 321.
Legend of Joseph, 273–280.
Legge, R. H., 22.
Letters and articles by Strauss, xiii, 43.
Liszt: revealed to Strauss by Ritter, 18; Strauss in his place at Weimar, 25; Liszt concerts, 26; prominent on Strauss's programs, 35; triumphs over enemies, 46; "highly respectable", 73; a pioneer, 77; inspired by Berlioz, 81; his aristocratic program music, 82; on limitations of music, 82; praised by Wagner, 83; charm of variety, 84; some of his symphonic poems, 84–87; his chief claim to honor, 92; adds a new chapter to history of form, 92;

refuses to worship stuffed fetish, 94; Wagner recants, 96; emancipator, 97; his difficult task, 98; a master of coherent form, 94, 100; even in his rhapsodies, 100; his world victory, 101; not a polyphonist, 105; never over-orchestrates, 108; his new art of orchestration, 108–109; a trombone anecdote, 115; as a melodist, 118; extraordinary influence on Wagner, 124; creates a new epoch in harmony, 125; influence on Russian composers, 125; whole-tone and Hungarian scales, 125; his music often bungled, 127; as conductor of his own works, 128; advice to conductors, 128; died too soon, 129; in New York, 130; triumph in Boston, 130–132; why Liszt is dwelt on in this book, 132; greatest orchestral composer since Beethoven, 134; brevity of his symphonic poems, 134; happy use of instruments, 137.
London, 33, 69, 233, 251, 261.
Love and music, 162–163.

M

Macbeth, 157–162.
MacDowell, 80.
Mahler, 18, 54, 130, 217.
Maitland, Fuller, 22, 320.
Mazeppa, 83, 137.
Melody, 115–119, 120–123, 162.
Mendelssohn, 7, 80.
Metropolitan Opera House, 52, 305–312.
Mottl, F., 55, 133.
Mozart, 16, 109, 111, 136, 163.
Muck, K., 118, 130.
Müller-Reuter, 316.
Munich, 3, 20, 31, 150, 232.
Musical America, 63.
Musical Courier, 265, 271, 278.
Musical Leader, 69.
Musical Times, 98, 107.

N

Newman, Ernest, xii, xv, 77, 79, 90, 91, 98, 105, 112, 118, 126, 147, 153, 159, 166, 196, 202, 211, 212, 227, 234, 292, 320.
New York. *See* America.
Niecks, F., 82, 172, 320.
Nietzsche, 180, 182.
Nijinski, 40, 274, 275, 315.
Noren, 120.

O

Orchestra: operatic, *versus* singers, 52; make-up of Strauss's, 103, 114; tone-colors, 107; Wagner's secret, 110; polyphony, 110; mammoth, 114; saxophones, 115; violin with five strings, 309.
Orchestration: polyphony and tone-color, 103; from Haydn and Beethoven to Liszt and Strauss, 107–109; eye-music, 106, 261; miscalculations, 112; new instruments, 113; Berlioz's treatise edited by Strauss, 135–136; future of, 137; the epoch-making horn, 139; Wagner's, 110, 139, 241; expression of emotions, 136–141; idiomatic, 241, 249.
Osgood, H. O., 278.

P

Paderewski, 35, 217.
Paine, J. K., 320.
Parry, H., 111.
Parsifal, 11.
Parsing, 154.
Pfohl, F., 260.
Piano pieces by Strauss, 12, 19, 24, 146–151.
Pictorial Review, 61.
Philharmonic Society, New York, 130, 161, 217, 219, 297.
Polyphony, 104, 110.
Program music: 77–142; "a misdemeanor", 78; primitive and medieval, 79; modern instrumental, 79; Beethoven, Mendels-

sohn and Schumann, 80; Liszt's aristocratic, 82; his symphonic poems, 84–87; Strauss's symphonic puzzles, 88; his method, 88–92; "tomfoolery", 91; why critics want programs, 156.

R

Reger, Max, 111, 117.
Richter, Hans, 133, 148.
Riemann, Hugo, xi, 100, 125.
Ritter, A., 18, 56, 169.
Rolland, Romain, 96, 119, 152, 196, 199, 202, 210, 212, 321.
Rosenkavalier, Der, 254–264.
Russell, A., 306.
Russian composers and Liszt, 125.

S

Sachs, W. von, 269.
Saint-Saëns: on Liszt's *Faust*, 83; on *Mazeppa*, 86; his own symphonic poems, 87; on Liszt's historic achievement, 92; on the *Flying Dutchman*, 95; defines symphonic poem, 95; his books, 96; on Liszt as orchestral colorist, 108; Liszt's melodic fecundity, 118; melody and harmony, 123.
Salome, 37, 113, 234–243, 305, 310.
Saxophones, 115.
Schindler, K., 106.
Schmidt, L., xiii, 278, 282, 318.
Schmitz, E., 316.
Schönberg, A., 106, 126.
Schubert, 7, 111, 117, 145, 260, 268.
Schumann, 80, 98.
Schumann-Heink, E., 217, 250.
Seidl, Arthur, 27, 30, 130, 158, 226, 243, 318.
Serenade (song), 149, 162, 291, 301.
Serenade for wind instruments, 12.
Shaw, G. B., xiii, 274.
Sinfonia Domestica, 63, 112, 115, 203–212, 302.
Songs of Strauss, 29, 60, 62, 283–294.
Spanuth, A., 100, 198, 213, 319.
Specht, R., xii, 145, 319.
Stanford, C. V., 116.
Steinitzer, M., 8, 23, 30, 54, 57, 91, 112, 145, 147, 148, 151, 160, 166, 173, 196, 198, 199, 226, 255, 273, 314, 317.
Stephens, W., 60.
Stransky, Josef, Dedication, 55, 130, 201.
Strauss, Franz, 5–7, 13.
Strauss, Johann, 35, 220.
Strauss, Pauline, 29, 61.
Strauss, Richard: Life, Personal Traits and Opinions: his estimate of his chances for immortality, xiii; interesting to read about, xiv; date of birth, 3; his mother's family, 5; his father, 5; precocious, 7; early hatred of Wagner, 10; conversion, 11; conducts first time, 13; conductor at Meiningen, 14; not appreciated in Munich, 20; first trip to Italy, 21; a funny error, 22; amused by hissing, 23; in Liszt's place at Weimar, 25; "first place to the living", 25; opinion on Liszt, 26; trip to Egypt and composition of first opera, 28; marriage and return to Munich, 29; conducts in Berlin, 31; well advertised, 31; wealthy through his own energy, 32; why Berlin wanted him, 32; concert tours, 33; the Kaiser's attitude, 34; gives modern concerts in Berlin, 34; autobiography in tones, 36; operatic sensations, 37; ephemeral successes, 39; more surprises, 39; personal traits, 42–73; energy, 43; as letter writer and editor, 43–45; helpful adverse criticism, 45; attitude of the public, 46; champions colleagues, 47; launches *Hänsel and Gretel*, 49; forwards Elgar, 49; cosmopolitan taste, 40; president of Allgemeine Musikverein, 50; helps to stop exploiting of composers, 51; a

busy conductor, 53; one source of his wealth, 54; appearance when conducting, 54; no shirker, 55; as interpreter of his own works, 55; how he kept his health, 56; cards, 57; interview by W. Armstrong, 58; not nervous after composing, 58; amiable at rehearsal, 60; his home at Garmisch, 61; talks while composing, 61; "not a proofreader for others", 62; dislikes Berlin, 63; sarcastic, 63; treatment of a hostile critic, 64; always makes money, 66; makes critics pay for seats, 66; sketched by Huneker, 66; an English portrait, 67; his way of conducting, 68; general culture, 68; closefistedness, 71; sense of humor, 72; "frivolous conduct", 73; on Liszt's poetic treatment of orchestra, 109; blows his own horn, 109; modesty, 113; why used new instruments, 113; an advantage over Liszt, 127; cult in New York, 130; as a judge, 132; had the genius to recognize Liszt's genius, 134; longing for Italy, 152; cannot create in winter, 152; a pampered child of fortune, 197; venomous critics, 197; his *Salome* and *Elektra* successes, 37, 244; a joke on German papers, 254; Dresden squabble over *Rosenkavalier*, 255; lack of practical sense, 255, 267, 279; adventures in America, 297–311; festival in New York, 301; triumph in Chicago, 302; conducts at a department store, 304; correspondence with Conried, 305; "wants the earth", 306; abuses Americans, 311; a virtuoso in business matters, 311.

Strauss, Richard, As a Composer and Interpreter: genius or charlatan? xi; dangerous technic, xi; discordant critics, xi–xiv; Percy Grainger's estimate, xvi–xxv; influenced by classical and romantic composers, 16, 145; turns from Brahms to Liszt, 16–18; conducts in the modern way, 21; follows Liszt's principles, 26; in Wagner's footsteps, 27; as prima donna conductor, 52; "with his knees", 54; modifications of tempo, 54; "objective" conducting, 55; composes in the country, 59; French influences, 67; habits in composing, 67; autobiographic works, 73; has he surpassed Liszt? 77, 101; wants to follow Liszt, 88, 166; condemns his own method, 89; "puzzled to the point of insanity", 90; "wild charge of formlessness", 98; his marvelous mind, 102; tries to be simple, 103; master of polyphony, 104; music for the eyes, 105; surpassed by Schönberg, 106; as orchestral colorist, 107–109; tone color and polyphony, 110; a pupil of Wagner, 113; use of new instruments, 113; big orchestras, 114; not a great melodist, 118; this point judged in court, 120; as a harmonist, 124; ink spots on a white vest, 126; duration of his tone poems, 134; in his element, 135; improves the musicians, 140; displays his most secret feelings, 210; makes instruments speak foreign languages, 241; when interesting, 247; master of the horrible, 248; lacks gift of tenderness, 248; dance music, 273; as a song writer, 283–291; why he followed Wolf, 286; how he composed his songs, 286; arranges folk-songs, 292; edits a Gluck opera, 312.

Strauss, Richard, Works: *See* under their names; also, under CHAMBER and CHORAL MUSIC; PIANO PIECES; SONGS.